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ART AND ART HISTORY

A metaphysics of the countryside

Ronald Paulson

JOHN HAYES
The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Volume One, Critical Text, Volume Two, Catalogue Raisonné
63pp, with 13 colour and 600 monochrome illustrations. Philip Wilson, £77.50 the set.
085611442

If Reynolds joined portraiture with the forms and iconography of history painting, Gainsborough did the same with landscape, as though he divined that landscape was replacing history in the painter's pantheon. His later portraits are landscape shapes with the same indeterminacy as the masses of foliage in their backgrounds. Reynolds commented on their vagueness, which he believed explained their "striking resemblance" to the stars. It is not, as used to be thought, that Gainsborough escaped from portraiture into landscape but that he began as a landscapist and ended as a portraitist, working portraits and other figures into his landscapes as he went along. A catalogue of his landscape paintings begins with the question of what to exclude. John Hayes chooses to exclude the "fancy pictures" as well as portraits, presumably on the basis of the size of the figures relative to the landscape; he retains the history paintings, perhaps because there are only two, and the cottage scenes. Sometimes the distinction is fine, as when he keeps "Hounds coursing a Fox" (no 159), calling it "Wooded Landscape with Hounds coursing a Fox", and omits "Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting" (Kenwood).

The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough is a beautiful, indispensable and superlatively treated book. It is the culmination of twenty years of research that includes Hayes's catalogues of the drawings and the prints and his 1980 Gainsborough retrospective at the Tate. Unlike the recently published Turner and Blake catalogues with their one volume of mostly colour reproductions and another of essays, Hayes's book devotes one volume to a monograph on the subject of all Gainsborough's landscape art in its historical and biographical contexts, ending with appendices on his "studio", on Gainsborough's portraits, on other copyists and imitators. The second volume is the illustrated catalogue raisonné of his landscape paintings; not the least of its importance for scholars will be to serve as a "chronology raisonné". The doing of pictures allows us for the first time to see with some confidence how Gainsborough developed; to test all the generalizations in the old monographs and in more recent speculative essays which were often based on insufficient evidence; and to see the conceptualizing of Hayes's essay.

The chief problem of Gainsborough the landscape painter is his narrow range compared with his pre-eminent rivals, Turner and Constable. In Ellis Waterhouse's words, quoted by Hayes, Gainsborough fell "back on the kind of landscape setting as traditional as the Victorian photograph's backdrop". Hayes shows that shortly after 1750, after the Gainsboroughs abandoned a careful observation of place in order to rely on "conventionalisms of the rococo" or a "tendency towards generalization". As he began to paint portraits, the landscape may be thought to have become, even when independent of portraits, a portrait-painter's landscape. But what backdrop? Hayes, decorative and formulaic as he is, uses to describe these landscapes, which nevertheless in their brilliance of colouring and brushwork, their boldness of effect, dominate any room in which they hang.

One way to deal with the problem is to say that Gainsborough was to a certain degree indulgent towards his own predisposition and talents; he did certain things with great fluency and he did them over and over again, and because he had no

very demanding or receptive market for his landscapes, he did them for himself. Another is to say that Gainsborough's landscapes are as much about the art of painting as about the Sudbury or the Bath countryside. He was a painter whose phases can better be named after the painters he imitated than the places he inhabited: the Dutch landscapists, especially Wijnants, were followed by Rubens and van Dyck, and by Murillo, as he moved from one palette and one way of handling paint to another.

Hayes correctly emphasizes the early, pervasive influence of Jacob van Ruisdael. Although a Gainsborough could never be mistaken for a Ruisdael landscape (as it might be, at different times, for a Wijnants or a Rubens), the two artists saw landscape in a fundamentally similar way. Ruisdael's most personal and deeply felt landscapes were focused on a single giant tree or a forest and on the taciturnity and mass of foliage. He eschewed historical elements in his landscapes, instead rearranging his topographical elements for picturesque emphasis or melodramatic reinforcement, sometimes adding symbolic ruins of tombstones. A pervasive theatricality was Ruisdael's replacement for history. Gainsborough customarily used both a natural horizon source of light and a studio source to highlight a figure or a natural feature. As the well-known story tells, he would place "cork or coal for his foregrounds, make middle grounds of sand and clay, bushes of mosses and lichens, and set up distant woods of broom [sic]. This was his mimetic object, painted by candlelight."

Of the prodigious number of landscape types that were developed by Ruisdael, however, Gainsborough employed only one, and that the least informative or definitive, the most decorative or rhetorical. This is the landscape mode Wolfgang Stechow describes in his *Dutch Landscape* as "an arrangement of details to fit a preselected pattern": a "distinction of light and shade... dictated by compositional convenience". As opposed to a "find" in nature, a composition which "seems to obey the laws of natural lighting, is less symmetrical and serves to bring out the individual qualities of the foliage...". It is from the authority of this extreme, and minor, Ruisdael type that Gainsborough's landscapes after 1750 derive.

Hayes has recognized that this "repertory of motifs... forms and rhythms" became a personal vocabulary for Gainsborough - that they "sprang from the depths of his being and gradually came to reflect his feelings about the world around him" better than could "the most penetrating naturalism". But at other times he writes that "Subject-matter of any clearly defined or meaningful description... set alone... imagery carrying persuasive emotional overtones, was not within Gainsborough's grasp, or schema of things...". The latter serves specifically as a dismissal of John Barrell's thesis (in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 1980) about Gainsborough's depiction of the labouring poor, but it seems to dismiss all "subject-matter".

Hayes solves this problem of Gainsborough's formulaic landscape, by placing him in the history of styles, in particular the rococo. He draws connections between the rococo style and the aesthetic of the picturesque, between French elegance and English empiricist play-of-mind, and between landscape painting... all of which contribute to the phenomenon of Gainsborough's landscapes. Up to a point this position illuminates the landscapes. But everything depends on how "rococo" is defined. Besides the use of serpentine lines, Hayes describes the rococo style as "sophisticated" but "devoid of any intellectual organization, complex layers of meaning or seriousness of intent". This could be true of Gravelot's or Hayman's rococo, and might allow for a weak, sentimental, but it does not encompass the rococo of either Hogarth or Richard Bentley. Hayes

quotes for support Robert Wark, another scholar who uses the rococo to explain eighteenth-century English art, on the case of Hogarth and the impossibility of using this playful style "for a deeper and richer emotional content". We might agree that a "deeper and richer emotional content" lies beyond the range of the Hogarthian rococo if Wark means by that the sublime of Constable and Turner; but the nature and degree of the "emotional content", as well as of the "intellectual organization", in Gainsborough's landscapes deserve to be ascertained.

Hogarth's relevance is established by Hayes himself, who makes a great deal of the possibility that Hogarth was involved in Gainsborough's commission to execute the roundel for the Foundling Hospital in 1748. By the third repetition of the story Hayes has Gainsborough "seemingly encouraged by Hogarth" to paint this landscape. (There is, I should add, no direct evidence on this point.) He notices how the Hogarth figures gambling on a gravestone in "Industry and Idleness" (plate 2) were used by Gainsborough in "View of St Mary's Church, Hadleigh", and he acknowledges the connection between Gainsborough, Gravelot, Hayman, Hogarth, the rococo and the St Martin's Lane Academy, as well as Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* of 1753 (which, though published after Gainsborough's return to Sudbury, Hayes assumes he had heard Hogarth "constantly discuss in conversation"). He even believes that "the strikingly perspectival composition" of the Foundling Hospital roundel, "The Charterhouse", derives from Hogarth's prints (I suppose from an interior like "Harlot", plate 4); whereas it seems to me that the angle long diagonal of the exterior wall in the roundel has a more reasonable source in some of Constable's "topographical" compositions which Gainsborough could have seen in London in 1747 or 1748. Given this confidence in the presence of Hogarth in Gainsborough's formative years, it is surprising that Hayes does not accept as an influence, along with the decorative cartouches around the Houbraken heads of eminent Englishmen, the illustrative plates of Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* with their witty interplay of the formal and the cognitive, the aesthetic and the moral.

A literary equivalent to Gainsborough's landscapes mentioned by both Hayes and Barrell, in connection, for example, with "The Harvest Wagon" of 1767 (no 88), is "the mood... of John Gay's influential pastoral, 'The Shepherd's Week'". The latter is a mock-pastoral poem which plays style against action, form against content, and is characterized by the "intellectual organization, complex layers of meaning or seriousness of intent" denied by Hayes to the rococo. I am reminded of the art historian Joseph Burke's

suggestive remarks on two of Gainsborough's "fancy pictures", the "Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher" (1785), which he says "evokes the Christ Child as the Good Shepherd", and "The Woodman" (1787), which recalls

the saint or hermit in a wilderness while depicting old age at the mercy of wild nature. Visionary devotion has been translated into the tramp's fear before the lightning; his hands are clasped not in prayer but on his stick; in place of St Jerome's placid lion, a Snyder-like dog shrinks back with snarling defiance.

As if startled by his temerity, Burke retreats: "The evocation of religious art is probably unconscious and due simply to Gainsborough's study of religious paintings by Murillo and similar masters." But he has put his finger on the kind of "translation" that takes place when one style or configuration is used to represent a very different subject. In the ambience of the St Martin's Lane artists the evocation must be a travesty in the manner of "The Shepherd's Week" or Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (plate 1). The woodman and his dog are to a St Jerome and his lion as Gay's butcher's son is to Cupid, son of Mars and Venus: "Sure he was born some bloody Butcher's Son, / Bred up in Shambles, where our Younglings slain, / Erst taught him Mischief and to sport with Pain."

Gainsborough's generally accepted "borrow" of the Rubens "Descent from the Cross" to structure the drinking figures in "The Harvest Wagon" is a similarly muted travesty. This mock-form involves not only painting the rustics in the elegant and fluent style of Rubens (all that Hayes and Barrell see) but evoking in a sense that Hogarth would have understood, in these "peasants", striving upward toward a drink of wine from the "lathern Bottle, long in Harvest try'd" (bequeathed in Gay's poem by Blouzelinda to her lover Grubbiol) a low version of the figures reaching up for Christ's Body and Blood in the eucharistic "Descent from the Cross". The effect is not decoration but the engineering of equivalence and contemporary myth. These peasants, participating in some primitive fertility ritual in a landscape bathed in the most wonderful yellows and greens, are conveyed with an eloquence that for the only time in English painting joins figures and landscape in a single action. (I am thinking of the discrepancy between fluent landscape and clumsy figures in Turner and Constable.)

Hayes is unequivocal in his dismissal of Barrell's thesis that we should examine closely the figures in Gainsborough's landscapes. True, to detect any social comment or submerged ideology as Barrell does in conventional scenes of rural lovers or even "peasants" or wood-carriers whose figures and faces are pretty masks is absurd. But to ignore

completely the configurations - the choices Gainsborough made of staffage, especially the changes he rang on particular groups, and the development from one set of dramatic personae to another, is also misleading. Hayes takes the figures seriously as conventional staffage, but he could have corrected Barrell's emphasis without dismissing it. For example, the two or three early landscapes on which Barrell bases his thesis of a contrast between "industry and idleness" - working class and ruling class - subordinate the workers to the tovers (who are also working-class), turning labour into if anything a comment on love, certainly not vice versa.

The various possible approaches to figures in a Gainsborough landscape can be charted in his best-known portrait group, that of "Mr and Mrs Andrews" (1748-50, National Gallery). John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*, has pointed to the sense of ownership implicit in the stretch of land to the right of Mr and Mrs Andrews, and Lawrence Gowing has responded acerbically:

The explicit theme of a contemporary and precisely analogous design by Gainsborough's mentor Francis Hayman suggests that the people in such pictures were engaged in philosophic enjoyment of "the great principle... the genuine Light of uncorrupted and unpurported Nature."

Berger replies: "... this in no way precludes them from being at the same time proud landowners. In most cases the possession of private land was the precondition for such philosophic enjoyment - which was not uncommon among the landed gentry. This proprietorial "nature" Berger opposes to "the nature of other men", which consisted of the poaching laws, punishments for as little as stealing a potato, and the strictness of property limits. He reads this unconscious ideology into Gainsborough's portrait of the Andrews couple.

Both Gowing and Berger omit to mention that the painting is a marriage picture. Hayes recognizes this fact, relating the way the fields are being (in Berger's terms) worked to the fertility of the soil, the marital union (the sheaves of stacked corn being "a traditional symbol of human fertility"). He insists nevertheless that the commission was primarily an opportunity or excuse for Gainsborough to paint a landscape: a generalization one would not want to contest, though it leaves out Mr and Mrs Andrews.

I would not want to go so far as Barrell might and see the hunting husband and the meditative wife as illustrations of industry and idleness; though they may (in Gowing's terms) suggest the active and the contemplative life. Yet as so often with the "rococo" Gainsborough, incongruous details stand out: the

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poppy in the right foreground, a single touch of bright red; the small white flowers further back along the row of sheaves draw our attention; but above all, the roundish, blank shape in Mrs Andrews's hand, defined only by a feather, which seems to indicate that Gainsborough intended to paint a bird, most probably a gamebird, in her lap - and had second thoughts.

If marriage is the occasion for this picture, and the field is a conventional symbol of generation (or of property), then the tree suggests the rustic growth of a family and on estate. But the dog, not sleeping at the couple's feet as Marital Fidelity, is a hunting dog, attached only to the husband. The wife, enclosed by the lines of a green metal bench, is sharply separated from the landscape. In the midst of all this the unfinished, rejected bird illustrates a rule of interpretive study: *cherchez l'erreur*. Was it to be related to the husband's gun something he had shot and presented to his wife, becoming a symbol (related to the slang, *bird* = maiden) of his possession of her? Does the dead bird in this painting of around 1750 point toward the hunted Acton-ns-slag or the fox coursed by hounds of around 1785 (nos 159-60)? Is the bird a metonymy for the situation of the landowner in relation to nature, which he has here cribbed, cabined and confined, or for the husband in relation to his wife?

It is useful to know, as Marcia Pointon has shown in her essay "Gainsborough and the Landscape of Retirement" (1979), that Richard Graves's poem "On Gainsborough's Landscapes with Portraits; full length Figures less than life, drawn in Pairs as walking through woods, etc." (in *Shenstone's Miscellaneous*, 1759-63) connects "pairs" like Mr and Mrs Andrews with Adam and Eve in a lost paradise which through Gainsborough's brush becomes a "Paradise regain'd". Pointon argues, like Gowing, that scenes of this sort are literary, illustrative of the retirement theme or melancholy contemplation, the result of reading Gray's "Elegy" written in a Country Church Yard and other graveyard poetry. But she phrases the solemnly quoted from Gainsborough's letters of 1775 - twenty years later - to support her thesis ("the Vainly of the Age, and the great Gift of All will make better allowance for us than we make for one another") are out of context and confuse a theme of melancholy valuing with Gainsborough's epistolary wit and his spirits.

There may be a sense in which his lovers, often shown standing before a naive blasted tree, could be taken for Adam and Eve in a landscape, but given the context of Hogarth's *Analysis* and London in the 1740s, they seem more ironic and playful, in the manner of "The Shepherd's Week", then conducive to serious melancholy meditation. The chrono-

logy, in fact, tells the story. The juxtaposition of lovers and tree, sometimes on a hilltop, begins in 1755-57 (nos 59, 62, 64, 65) and certainly reflects a wry contrast of young love and the old, either pollarded or dead tree, which by 1780 (perhaps now from a reading of Graves or Gray) has become the more literal-minded vanitas (image of the lovers in a churchyard reading an epitaph on a gravestone (to be contrasted also with the boys cheerfully gambling on a gravestone in the 1748 "View of St Mary's Church, Hadleigh").

As early as 1748-50 Gainsborough painted a pair of rustic lovers balanced by a black and a white cow (and by another male-female pair with a donkey). By 1762-63 the lovers are again appearing with a pair of cows (79) and in 1766 (87), a major work, two lovers at a stile are paired with two horses, one light and one dark (corresponding to the lovers' dress) drawing a cart up a road into the distance. In 1771-73 lovers are juxtaposed with a line of cattle being driven down a path (103), and in no 109 the beau is separated from his lover by the inconvenient cattle (see also 108, 113).

All we have to do is consult "Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting" of 1783 (Kenwood), where the humans and animals are unquestionably paralleled as to hair-color and allegiance, for it to become fairly clear that the parallels in the landscapes cannot be fortuitous. The close affinity of Gainsborough and Rowlandson is not made enough of by Hayes in his section on influences. We know that Rowlandson copied Gainsborough drawings and that his landscapes are often comic versions of Gainsborough's. But while he contrasts aesthetically "picturesque" livestock and "beautiful" lovers (showing Dr Syntax to prefer the former), Gainsborough seeks out the affinity, and it is an affinity that links the aesthetic and the human in a way not too different from the witty aesthetic-moral play of Hogarth's *Analysis* plates. A basic strategy of his early Dutch-inspired landscapes seems to be the juxtaposition of a pair (lovers, Mr and Mrs Andrews, Adam and Eve) with some equivocal symbol, a dead bird or tree, a bovine couple or a lemming-like procession of cattle.

The first peasant family picture appears in 1753-54; the group posed next to a tree (In no 45 alive, in 44 dead), but the peasants do not become a strong subject until 1767-72 when they are on horseback going or coming over a hill (in 1778-80 seated around a camp-fire), with an emphasis on the interplay of male and female - she often ignoring him for her own thoughts (which Pointon would conclude are melancholy). The cottage scenes, showing peasants around a cottage door, begin in 1772 (105), and finally the late, stark land-

scapes with only a shepherd and his sheep begin in 1783 (137, 143-47). These continue to the end of Gainsborough's life. Is there, one wonders, any significance in the fact that he painted lovers in his twenties, developing the ironic parallels with trees and cattle in his thirties and forties; in his forties began to paint his peasants - mixed groups, some families - and in his fifties painted solitary shepherds in rugged, lonely terrain? By this time he was also, of course, painting his fancy pictures of Murillo wails, and in the light of these works it is possible to speculate that he may have learned subsequently to see his landscapes through poets' eyes and that his progression may have been from Clay to Gray, from Augustan to what used to be called pre-Romantic.

If the figures may be said to have some function beyond purely formal or decorative in the landscapes, what of the landscape formula itself? The common element, which was already present in the Dutch landscapes of his youth and persisted in a more painterly and emphatic way in Rubens's landscapes, was a confluence of serpentine lines in a lazy Y or gamma. In one of Hayes's sensitive formal analyses he describes the rooco serpentine structure of a landscape in St Louis (no 52), where the "powerful serpentine line begins in the foreground, sweeps over the hilltop... passes down and beyond the bank into the middle distance and thence, through the agency of the winding river, into the very depths of the composition." This is, of course, the way the eye ordinarily functions in a Claude landscape. In this particular Gainsborough landscape, though Hayes should have mentioned the remarkable discontinuity of the serpentine line, the eye tends to follow the broken lines into the scene because the figures on the road are travelling in that direction. What Hayes does not mention is that in the vast majority of Gainsborough's landscapes the figures are moving away from the horizon and towards the viewer, down into either the middle distance or the foreground of the composition and off the canvas. With all of the landscapes in front of us, we can now see that statistically this form predominates, becoming more emphatic in the later paintings, until in the landscapes with a single shepherd and his flock the downward sweep defines mountain gorges.

Instead of leading into the landscape, the winding track usually draws the eye down and out of the bottom, or into a pool or a ravine of some sort near the bottom. Gainsborough's early copy (drawing) of Ruisdael's "La Forêt", described by Hayes (Gauguin Mary Woodall) as a "faithful repetition", in fact cuts off the bottom of Ruisdael's composition, leaving it open where Ruisdael closed it. The line is rooco, certainly, and



Balhaus painted this portrait of Miro with his daughter Dalares during the years 1937-38. The Spanish artist allowed Balhaus as many sittings as he wanted. His daughter, a restless figure in the picture, compared with her motionless, staring father, seems to have been less willing than him to make sacrifices for art. This is one of the many illustrations in Balhaus (155pp. Skira/Macmillan, £15, 0 333 34485 5) by Jean Leymarie which will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

the faces and figures when discernible are pretty, but the fact that they are all gravitating downwards is surely a distinctive feature. And the affect of the various stages of style is to give different meanings to the movement: whether a light, airy merging or metamorphosis of human into nature, the metamorphosis summed up in the story of Diana and Actaeon, or a darker, more intense, hectic, "romantic" composition that melodramatizes the situation.

Although it is still reductive, the opinion of the contemporary reviewer of Gainsborough's Mrs Richard Bagnall Sheridan (1785, National Gallery, Washington) that "she is painted under the umbrage of a romantic tree, and the accompanying objects are descriptive of retirement" might by then have been acceptable to

Gainsborough himself - though suspect he had expressed his intent more accurately when he wrote his letter of 1772: "How to satisfy my tawdry Friends [i.e. those who discourse on or patronize the topoi of retirement?], whilst you steal into the mild Evening gleam and middle time." Not confined to literary topos, Gainsborough's paintings imitate the landscape tradition of personal fantasy in England. Out of Ruisdael's imaginary Italianate landscapes and his own "Jewish Cemetery", and out of Zuccarelli's brainless decorative Gainsborough develops a typical English metaphysical or economic whiner. Stanley Spencer and Graham Sutherland, the great visionary English landscapists.

SOCIAL HISTORY

J.S. HOLLIDAY

The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience
Shipp. Gollancz. £12.50.
0 335 05236 7

RALPH MANN

After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849-1870

Shipp. Stanford University Press.
\$5.
0 8047 1136 4

"I wonder sometimes what you two actually imagined gold-digging was", Mr Howard told his reluctant daughters in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. "I've come to the conclusion you thought the gold would be lying around like pebbles, and you would just bend down and pick it up and get rich with it by the sackful." Such was the deluge that gripped tens of thousands of Americans and foreigners from 1848 to 1852, the years in which California became simultaneously a state of the US and a state of the human mind. Those who migrated there by land and sea were conscious of participating in a quest to a democratic Eldorado where, as they believed, the means would be paved with gold. Many of the early miners were lucky, as well as a few of the later ones. But for the great majority, California proved to be a bitter, glorious delusion. "It was a simple as all that," Howard went on to observe, "gold wouldn't be worth more than pebbles."

The gold had been discovered in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in January, 1848, a few days before Mexico officially ceded control of California and Oregon to the US. By 1849 the mineral range was known to extend for 400 miles. But an unexpected wilderness - the prairies, deserts and mountains of Indian Territory - separated California from Missouri, the starting-point of most overland journeys. Those who preferred not to walk the continent for months had either to sail round Cape Horn or else to cross Central America by foot, the latter the riskier route. California seemed more and more alluring. Dozens of joint-stock companies were formed to lessen the individual's risks on a long march, and in the spring of 1849 the members of

The democratic El Dorado

Mark Abley

these companies set out on the mass migration westward. (The goldseekers' ethos of rampant individualism was complemented, even challenged, by the necessity of co-operation in the wilderness.) At least 42,000 travellers reached California by the overland trails in 1849 alone; almost as many arrived by sea; several thousand others died along the way or turned back in despair. In the Black Rock Desert of what is now northern Nevada, some of the men noticed "a very beautiful mirage in the southwest... in which appeared a long lagoon of blue water and small islands reflected in its delightful looking bosom." The famished oxen saw it too, and ran towards it. Their corpses soon littered the sand. Animals and men alike seemed peculiarly susceptible to mirages in the south-west.

One of the '49ers was a young farmer from upstate New York called William Swain. An upright resilient man with a sharp eye for the natural world, Swain was unusual only for the persistence with which he kept a diary during the seven months of his journey from Youngstown to northern California. This diary, along with his occasional letters home, forms the narrative basis of J.S. Holliday's remarkable book *The World Rushed In*, which uses Swain's experience as exemplary of the sufferings and dreams of all the migrants. They were a surprisingly literary bunch; long evenings around the camp-fire, or mornings while their worn-out animals grazed, gave ample opportunity for the men to write extensive diaries. The shock of the wilderness encouraged introspection; the shock of California did not. Holliday has incorporated short extracts from more than 500 diaries and letters written to flesh out Swain's version of events, or to contrast with it. Preferring celebration to complaint, Swain tended to be laconic about disappointments on the trail; what he mentioned simply as "the springs, or Rabbit Hole Wells", one of his colleagues describes as "an abomination of desolation... an heap of hills into which slowly percolated filthy-looking, brackish water." Holliday has also included the letters sent to William Swain by his forlorn wife and brother, and (unlike so many writers about the gold rush) he gives detailed information about the migrants' unromantic return.

For theirs was a quest of a kind new in American history: few of its

participants expected to stay in the promised land for long. Seeing it as a dreary tract of land, the men were, Holliday writes, "concerned only with how to make the greatest amount of money in the shortest time. With that common motive, they also shared an indifference toward California and its future." The general desire was to get in, get rich, and get out. And whereas the nation's earlier migrations, such as the recent Mormon trek to Salt Lake, had been family affairs, the California gold-rush was almost exclusively male. It was a mercenary pilgrimage. After spending a few months or years rummaging for gold, most of the '49ers sailed home; in 1850 a total of 26,593 men and eight women left San Francisco by sea. Among them was William Swain, sadder, wiser, and richer by \$500 for a year of toil in El Dorado. In the first letter that his family had received after he reached California, Swain told them, "I have not seen the hour yet when I regretted leaving home." There was some brother. "There was some brother between us of your coming to this country. For God's sake think not of it. Stay at home."

To begin with, the journey westward had been longer and more strenuous than any of the gold-seekers had imagined. As the weather turned harsh, the animals died, the wagons were abandoned, the food ran out, and their own numbers dwindled, the intrepid faith of the '49ers became tinged with doubt and grief. Their fears of hostile Indians had proved largely unfounded, yet so had their confidence in the chosen route. Cholera and tick-fever were common to the plains and deserts; scurvy and diarrhoea plagued the migrants as they climbed the Sierra Nevada and entered California. Yet the bodily discomforts would have mattered little to the survivors if only the long-awaited gold had truly been plentiful for all. The rigours of the trek preserved an impressive discipline among the majority of immigrants; but in California, then as later, moral restraints slipped away. Heinrich Schliemann, who arrived in San Francisco by ship in 1851, was at first lost in admiration and wonder for the achievements of the previous two years. "But these sentiments soon disappeared," he noted sourly, "when the new arriver... sees that all is based here on swindling, that all is abominable falsehood, fraud and humbug, or in plain California: that all is calculated to 'shave'."

Such opinions were not limited to embittered foreigners. The American historian William E. Connelley chose to describe the gold-rush in terms before which a European would surely hesitate: "It revolutionized America... It was the beginning of our national madness, of our insanity of greed. It marks the advent of character decadence and American moral degeneracy." The pursuit of happiness had turned into a lust for wealth. Even if other motives - adventure, wanderlust, a faith in Manifest Destiny - helped to persuade some of the gold-seekers to venture forth, the primary motive was materialistic. Fittingly enough, a reluctance to part with possessions, even when their lives were in danger, afflicted many of the emigrants on their appalling journey over the high Sierra in autumn. The ones who reached California in safety were to discover a society where the real fortunes were being accumulated by gamblers, speculators, prostitutes and merchants, who could sell a boiled egg for 75 cents or rent an upstairs room in San Francisco for \$1,800 a month. By 1850, there were simply too many miners chasing the gold. "The hills have been cut and scalped", the naturalist John Muir was soon to observe, "and every gorge and gulch and valley torn to pieces and dismembered, expressing a fierce and desperate energy hard to understand."

Holliday, who has been preparing this work for three decades, probably understands the gold-rush better than anyone alive. He has created a book of immense value to our knowledge not only of the physical details of the migration but also of its psychology and mythology. *The World Rushed In* evokes the grand illusion no less vividly than the angry disillusion. By choosing to seek their fortunes in some dust across the continent, even the most pious '49ers had behaved as gamblers - but the realization, brutal, that the letters sent to Swain by his family are particularly valuable as a rare expression of the feelings of "California-Widows"; one letter from Sabrina Swain begins cheerfully enough by talking of "the privilege of mingling with Christian friends", but ends in a cry of raw pain: "William, I cannot wait much longer. I want to see you so bad." In the end, Holliday's view of the subject is far different from the conventional wisdom: "The gold rush was in many respects a national tragedy, much like a war, with families separated and not only by distance but equally by fear and silence." Swain was a fortunate soldier: he retreated with his pride and his marriage intact.

As the gold fever died away, most of the mining camps died with it. A few, however, endured to become towns and cities. The two most important mining towns in the state were the neighbouring settlements of Grass Valley and Nevada City, about 75 miles north-east of Sacramento; in a region where the mineral deposits were

rich enough to be worked continually in spite of depression, speculation, and gold rushes elsewhere. The early years of these rough communities are analysed in *After the Gold Rush*, a book written from the refreshing belief that "western American history is largely an urban history". Ralph Mann suggests that as the mining towns became permanently established, the skills and needs of foreigners gradually took precedence over those of the restless native-born Americans. Two decades after the gold rush, only a quarter of all men in Grass Valley were American by birth; more than half came from Britain (particularly Cornwall) and Ireland. In fact, Grass Valley was well on its way to becoming a Cornish miners' town.

But the book promises more insights than it delivers. For one thing, it lacks immediacy; we hear directly from few of the settlers or visitors, as though Mann equates vitality with unreliability. (He would not dream of quoting Schliemann's jaundiced comment: "Nevado City, a small and extremely nasty place in the midst of a pine forest".) More seriously, he admits that "the heart of the study's data was drawn from the manuscript census records of the two towns", which were then "correlated by a computer program". But a torrent of numerical facts short of an educated understanding, especially when the evidence is suspect from the start. As a matter of policy, for example, the census-takers did not count prostitutes, and they underestimated the number of Chinese and Latin Americans. One of the many tables shows that by 1870, Grass Valley had 795 American-born residents; another, that it had 795 American-born working men; a third, that it had 795 American-born males. Mann also indicates that of the 765 miners living in Nevada City in 1850, only four were married - a figure which is absurdly small, unless it reports the number of men whose wives were present in the town.

The most telling moments in *After the Gold Rush* come not from such computerized statistics but from Mann's scrutiny of contemporary newspapers. As *The World Rushed In* so beautifully demonstrates, history is always a study of perception. And sometimes the perceptions of the Californian pioneers cast a long shadow over present-day America. Aaron Sargent, editor of the Nevada City Journal, welcomed the vigilante groups created to rid the mining camps of Mexicans by saying, "The extermination of such lawlessness is the only safeguard of society." That acid mixture of religion, ignorance and militarism survives to this day, unfortunately; Aaron Sargent has successors who look forward to nuclear war as an act of divine and cleansing justice. Or as Mann ruefully admits, "The sense that American civilization has to overcome the culture carried with it - the seeds of moral coercion, Know Nothingism, and at times mob action."

Manufacture triumphant

John Butt

BARRIE TRINDER

The Making of the Industrial Landscape
Shipp. Dent. £12.95.
0 460 04427 3

The effects of industrialization on the topography of mining and manufacturing districts are ostensibly the concern of this book, but essentially the treatment is historical and chronological rather than geographical; there is little comment on the contemporary scene, and no discussion at all of the determinants of change after 1914. Barrie Trinder can make a contribution to economic, industrial and social history, but very much on his own often idiosyncratic terms. Yet there can be no doubt that the book makes stimulating use of contemporary accounts, many of them written in modern times, and it is likely to provoke discussion of a number of issues which Dr Trinder does not satisfactorily settle.

None of these is more intriguing or thought-provoking than the relationship between rural society and industry, especially locally based or, more strikingly, the evolution of towns in England and Wales. Only occasionally does Trinder discuss this question of the rural landscape, although the subject is a rural setting. Yet he does believe that landowners form a

significant group who were sometimes responsible for the nature and scale of industrial development, notably in mining. Some regions of the country, the South-West in particular, never lost their rural character, even though mining and quarrying left permanent marks upon them. Local food supplies, augmented from further afield as the population grew, were a prerequisite for industrial development, and the symbiosis between agriculture and industry, notably in textile and nail-making districts, was very apparent to contemporaries. Particularly relevant for the subject of this book is the accumulation of skills in rural districts; for example, masons, mill-wrights, clock-makers, viewfinders and surveyors all adapted their abilities to the new opportunities and problems posed by an industrializing society.

The twenty years from 1790 to 1810 Trinder describes as the heroic age. This chronology is wholly arbitrary and unsensational and it is astonishing to find no discussion here of whether the wars of these years accelerated or retarded industrial evolution. Did wars cause a misallocation of human resources in a fundamentally "labour-intensive economy", or a sharply increasing public sector borrowing requirement (with adverse effects on price levels and interest rates) not offer at least the prospect of a slackening in normal economic activity?

The later chapters of the book are much more satisfying. The engineers took up the challenges presented by economic development: the building of docks, harbours, roads, canals and railways form the substance of one chapter and the growing awareness of the horrors of industrialism - slums, pollution, unemployment and problems of public health - and some very interesting comparisons between Victorian and modern times. The mid-towns comprise another. The mid-towns, symbolized in the Cornish Palaces, and the extension of industrialism to new centres such as Middleborough and Barrow, are competently discussed, as in the developing critique of the new environment and its values. The illustrations are apt, and the bibliography is useful.

much detail about transport, especially canals, industrial colonies in textile and mining districts and the development of steam power. However, little that is original emerges.

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Rural meanings

Anne M. Wagner

LISA VERGARA

Rubens and the Poetics of Landscape
207pp, with two colour and 119 black-and-white illustrations.
Yale University Press. £29.
0 300 02598 4

Rubens and the Poetics of Landscape is ambitious. It takes as its point of departure the effort to assign meaning to Rubens's landscapes - a task only inadequately performed, Lisa Vergara claims, by previous historians of Rubens's art. In order to achieve this, she writes, it was necessary to have "a wider intellectual framework than the older literature offered". That statement alone would enlist most readers' interest, even their sympathy, and ensure their attention. In the end, though, it guarantees their disappointment.

Earlier writers have taken either of two views: that the landscapes are readily understood, or that they cannot be analysed. Vergara's argument, by contrast, is that given the right tools the complex meanings of the landscapes can be understood. It is essential to have a grasp of Rubens's biography, an idea of his intellectual formation, a way

of reading the landscapes in the light of classical literature and its reinterpretation by contemporary authors and a reading of the pictures themselves. This is ambitious, but also sensible: Rubens was a man with an active grasp of ancient literature. He literally built (as symbols in his house, his letters, his library, his art and his mind. And he painted landscapes which are structured and coded to allow them to carry various meanings - for example, ideas about continuity, fertility and order as essential to nature.

At the core of this argument about meaning are Rubens's rural landscapes. Unlike his pastoral views, with their amorous shepherds in idealized settings, these pictures are specific Flemish and natural. Their incorporation of drawings of peasants, cattle and wagons drawn from life is only one proof of the use they make of observation. More important, perhaps, is a new coincidence between topographical and compositional order. Following Brueghel's lead, Rubens employs the markers and boundaries which divide unfenced land - roads, brooks, stands of trees - to establish the interrelationships of the painted world he presents. An equation is made in works like these between the processes of sight and those of painting, even though other, more literary, ideas are suggested by

the figures within each landscape.

"Het Steen" and "The Rainbow" take their place in Vergara's account both as the fruit of Rubens's retreat to the countryside outside Antwerp (he purchased the chateau of Het Steen in 1635), and as a fruition of the rural landscape type. Following longstanding tradition, the two are read as pendants, and attention is paid to seeing the compositional and conceptual links between them. They are co-extensive and reflective; they open out to and close into each other. A cycle begun in "Het Steen", with its golden morning light, is completed in "The Rainbow", where lengthening shadows and retreating peasants signal the end of the working day. Together, the pictures are seen as examples of Rubens's painted seraglio, the final proof of his long-standing adherence to the idea of *la picture poësis*.

These ideas are provocative; if not conclusive. Rubens was a humanist, and we walk for an analysis of temporariness which would suggest a reason for the differences between his landscapes, say, and those of Brueghel, which respond to what seem to be a rather different brand of humanism. A problem arises, however, around just these kinds of conclusions: Rubens's landscapes, Vergara believes, are "intensely

personal", reflections of the "artist's self-conception". His "individual nature", his "personal sense of place". This view has several sources: the oldest accounts of Rubens's life, which describe his preoccupation with landscape in his final years; the artist's use of Het Steen and its surroundings as a landscape setting; the fact that some fourteen of the landscapes were in Rubens's possession when he died. (For Vergara, this is the "majority" of these paintings, though the recent landscape volume of the *Corpus Rubensianum* puts their total number close to fifty.) But the most important source for this idea seems to be the earlier Rubens landscape itself, which habitually sees Rubens's art as an extension of his life rather than as a painted counterproposal to it. As Vergara puts it, Rubens's art and life are "all of a piece".

The suggestion is not just improbable - it raises serious conceptual and interpretive difficulties. Even granted that Rubens was an exceptionally well integrated human being, successful in and unalienated from his work as a painter, it is hard to know what kinds of conclusion that fact licenses us to draw. Rubens's landscapes in this argument are not more "personal" than any other aspect of his work, and if all the work is "personal", the distinction at once becomes useless. (The idea that

the landscapes are "the most personal" is not very helpful either.) And we proceed with this line of thought, it provokes questions it ought itself to answer. If in fact the majority of Rubens's landscapes were in his hands when he died, how are we to know he did not keep them as part of a studio stock of pictures ready for purchase? Might they not simply have not yet been sold during the four or five years that intervened (at most) between their execution and his death? (The last letter Rubens wrote is about the sale of a view of the Eboracensis among the pictures in his studio.) What of the pictures which did leave his hands? Is their character any different from those Rubens kept? Can personal sensibility and patronage be said to overlap? Around what issues? And what of the twenty-nine landscapes owned by other artists which Rubens saw? What happens to the "personal" view there?

My point is simply this: despite an effort to sustain an argument of meaning - in Rubens's landscapes - Vergara finally seems to fall back on just the clichés she meant to avoid. Her arguments are not sure if words like "personal" and "unique" should be taken to indicate that Rubens's landscapes are unintelligible to his contemporaries, even though clarifying such ought to be the first priority of the historian.

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Overdoing the generosity

Charles Tomlinson

PABLO NERUDA
Isla Negra: A Notebook
 Translated from the Spanish by
 Alastair Reid
 416pp. Souvenir Press. £7.95
 (paperback, £5.95).
 0 285 64912 4

Pablo Neruda has written some of the best and worst poems of our era. He confronts the translator with two chief problems: an idiom which frequently has no easy equivalent in English—thus we possess no fully convincing version of his masterpiece *Las Alturas de Macchu Picchu*—and on the other, the extraordinary unevenness. The first of these problems stares in the face any would-be translator of *Las Alturas*, the second anyone who, like Alastair Reid, undertakes to give us, without picking and choosing, the whole of a work like *Memorial de Isla Negra*.

In 1981 John Felstiner tried a novel solution in his *The Way to Macchu Picchu* when he offered, not only a version of *Las Alturas*, but also a commentary in which he discusses some of the choices before him in attempting to render idiom, rhythms and syntax. This commentary tells us much about the original—perhaps more than any straightforward translation could do—and whether we like Felstiner's version or not, he has made it very clear to us what heights and abysses stand in our way should we feel inclined to try to scale Macchu Picchu ourselves. Writing on Felstiner in the *New York Review of Books*, Alastair Reid concluded by saying: "After this book, I feel there is something fortuitous about sending an English translation out into the world, albeit in a hand with the original. Translations are the residues of a long and complex process, and it may be true that, in the end, it is the process which is the more interesting."

Fortuitous or not, Reid does not follow Felstiner's example and one can see why. For one thing, *Isla Negra: A Notebook* is too extended a work for another its best poetry is less dense than *Las Alturas*, and its longeurs would hardly tempt a reader to want to know how a translator chose the available English clichés to match them. Resourceful and intelligent, Reid gives us as good an English version as we are likely to get, side by side with the Spanish. There are times when the reader does wonder why he made one choice of phrase rather than another, but that will eventually clear with any bilingual edition in hand. So no good reason exists for a reviewer to join what Reid calls "the translation police". He is sensible and clear and feels that for him to translate the book whole was a "deber de poeta". In Neruda's phrase. But does one, perhaps, catch a glint of relief when, in his Introduction, Reid unexpectedly confesses to us: "Translating has always been for me a profound process of discovery, but one I now intend to leave behind?"

Isla Negra is the village (neither an island nor black, as Enrico Mario Santí tells us in an Afterword) where Neruda had a house on the Pacific coast of Chile. This is the setting from which he looks back, as he is nearing sixty, over his entire life. *Isla Negra* consists of five books. The first of these is the most autobiographical. It runs from 1904-21 and the poet gives us many memorable pictures of his rain-drenched part of

Chile, together with affectionate portraits of his step-mother, his father, his uncle. There is often a humour at play here which makes these poems doubly delightful. In one of them, two sexually precocious little girls give the infant Neruda a nest with eggs in it to distract his mind, while they proceed to undress him and study "with their great eyes / their first small man". English, with its lack of diminutives, can never quite equal here "su primer hombrecito". Book Two takes us from the beginnings of his poetry to the consular years in the Far East. In Book Three come the meetings with Lorca, Alberti and Aleixandre and the tragedy of Spain in the Civil War. Book Four centres on the theme of exile, but by this point in the *Memorial* the idea of a chronological development of biography has long since been abandoned. The ideological climax occurs in the fifth and final book, with Neruda's reaction to Krushchev's "revelations" about Stalin: "What happened? What happened? How did it happen? / How could it happen?" Neruda hams up his feelings in a poem of twenty-nine sections in which he not very convincingly tries to get into Stalin's mind and now calls him "the musteloid god with his boots on". This will hardly do from the poet who for years had praised the dictator. Not so long before, in his elegy to Stalin, "En Su Muerte", he had declared, "Stalin is the noon of the maturity of men and of peoples". There is a moment of unintentional comedy towards the close of that poem when Neruda is roused from his sorrows by the words of a simple Chilean fisherman: "But Malenkov will continue his work now". Perhaps even Malenkov, exiled to his electricity project in Siberia, would see the joke by this point of time.

In *Isla Negra*, "The darkness was slashed with a golden knife"—that is, Krushchev spoke out—and Neruda, having gone through the motions of a laboured penitence, decides that "we Communists" are all right after all. We are the pure silver of earth, the true mineral in man. A moment in the dark does not blind us. We will die with no agony at all. Pure silver, golden knives, gullers, jasmine, honey, the sun come easily to Neruda, who has a sort of all-purpose manner which could be applied to nature, woman, birds, flowers and even to Stalin himself. Indeed, in one of his earlier poems, "Jardines Alejandres", the flowers in the mouths of East German youth are "the word of Stalin / on millions of lips". Neruda has been praised for writing "with burning simplicity about the great issues of our time" (Robert Nye) and for "breaking away from the concept of an élite or minority poetry"; and "using instead the arts of rhetoric" (Jean Franco). Yet when all is said and done, the burning simplicity and the arts of rhetoric too often serve politics of a dismal crudity. "Fiercely anti-intellectual", says Enrico Mario Santí of Neruda. Octavio Paz adds more dryly: "A man of few ideas". This is in a fascinating account of their relationship in *Verdebrando* for September, 1982. Clearly, in his Mexican sojourn, Neruda could not but grate away from the non-perilous intelligence of a Paz who, thirty years ago, against much opposition—got into print in Latin America a dossier on the Soviet camps. The *Losada Obras Completas* contains a telling image of Neruda in Mexico, a photograph of him signing the first edition of *Camilo* generally sealed together with the mural painter Diego Rivera and Alvaro Siqueiros, the three great egotists massively self-conscious beside one

another. Neruda's "burning simplicity" was very much that of the world of their history paintings with its rather sentimental Indianism and its strip-cartoon Marxism—though Rivera had a softer spot for Trotsky than either Neruda or Siqueiros (Siqueiros, in fact, tried to assassinate him).

One's feelings go out to Reid in his translation of the post-Krushchev section in Book Five of *Isla Negra*, but he has his rewards to come. There follow excellent poems like "The Long Day Called Thursday", about Neruda's difficulties in getting up and putting his socks on, and "Look to the Market", a celebration of the contents of Valparaíso market—the fish, birds, cheese, oranges, chestnuts, tomatoes, apples, wine. Once more, it is the humour of these poems that saves the day. Neruda can be funny about himself in the first of these and in the second he even seems to be mocking his own public manner:

Explaining the dark patches

Keith Bosley

LEONARDO SINIGALLI
The Ellipse: Selected Poems
 Translated by W. S. Di Piero
 249pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £18.45 (paperback, £7.35).
 0 691 06529 2

Leonardo Sinigalli died in 1981 at the age of seventy-two after a career worthy of a Renaissance man. As a young Southerner he studied in Rome, where he entered industry as an electrical engineer and literature as a poet under the Hermetic banner, turning away from the grandiose and public to celebrate the humble and intimate. Moving to Milan he combined literary work with painting, graphics, architecture and advertising. Back in Rome after the war he worked in radio and films, winning two prizes. Much in demand as a designer, he founded and edited a design journal, exhibited paintings and graphics, and continued publishing poems, stories, and essays on the arts and on mathematics. His interest in the greater Leonardo led him to be described as "a lesser Leonardo". A selection of his poems, drawn from forty years of work, was published in 1974 under the characteristic title *L'ellipse*. The *Ellipse* is not a

translation of that book, and one wonders why W. S. Di Piero uses the same title. It is a poem so called. One looks for an explanation in his introduction: it is brief and informative, but gives nothing away. The acknowledgements page makes no mention of any Italian edition at all, and the only copyright indication is that of the American publisher. One cannot help wondering what Mondadori makes of all this—and of the dedication "In memory of my father: whose father? And according to the catalogue data, the poet is still alive."

The bilingual text consists of three sections of poems, with a prose "Afterword" of reflections "On the Figure of the Poet". The section headings consist of dates only. With no bibliography and only the barest biographical outline in the introduction, these serve only to show that the poems are arranged into early, middle and late periods: surely more information would be appropriate to a foreign poet's debut in the English-speaking world.

Sinigalli surprisingly recalls Andrew Young in his obsession with small creatures—animals, birds, insects: "... A fly hovers silently near us in these awful days, this awful day."

Descending, with nodding foil in hand towards the pomander-and-cavat sphere you meet the Opponent, for this journey can only be accomplished by a pair who semaphore and swap quick respect before they set about their joint effort

which is making zeros and serifs so swiftly and with such sprung variety that the long steel skid, chatter, zing, switch, better, bite, kiss and ring in the complex rhythms of that society with its warrior snare of comma li faut

that has you facing a etched head near stable walls on a misty morning, striking, seeking the surrender in him, the pedgree-flaw through which to pin him, he probing for your own braggadoelo, confusion, ennu or inner fawling—

Seconds, holding stakes and cloths, look grim and surge a top. Exchanges halt for one of you stands, aging horribly, collapses, drowning from an entry of narrow hurt. The other drinks hot chocolate a trifle fast, but talking nonchalant—

a buzzer sounds. Heads are tucked under arms, and you and he swap curt nods in a more Christian century.

Atención al Mercado que es mi vida! Atención al Mercado compañeros!

One of the disconcerting things about reading Neruda is the way an air of generous ease, even a certain mockery of the self, gives way to an anxious self-regard. It was Whitman ("you / taught me / to be / American") who freed him from the alienated and artificially persuasive voice of *Residencia en la tierra* (1933). But as with Whitman's words to the prostitute, "Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature", there is something overbearing in the proffered generosity: "Let it be known that nobody / crossed my path without sharing my being". And how, for example, does one respond to such a tribute as that to the poet Homero Arce, who was for a time Neruda's secretary: "Here, once again, I give you [my thanks], because you

have lived / my life for me as if it were your own."

Neruda managed to arrange the passage aboard the *W. S. Di Piero* of a number of refugees from Spain and we hear of this in the first book of *Isla Negra*:

they came, summoned by my voice. Saavedra, I called, and the mason came. Zúñiga, I said, and there he was. Roca, I called, and he came with his wife. Athertill I cried out, and poetry arrived...

Less tactful than in his dealings with the vegetables in Valparaíso market, he leaves us in no doubt about what he thought of those who dominate the courts, Congress and the executive agencies pass, perhaps mercifully, almost totally unmentioned. Yet this death does not reflect a belief that personality is unimportant in the American political scene. On the contrary, political scientists in recent years have paid particular attention to the character of presidents. But it is characteristic of the prestige of the presidency that doing research on the presidency that though London Johnson figures prominently in books on the importance of presidential character, no completely satisfactory biography of him has appeared. Now Robert Caro has written the first volume of a three-volume biography of Johnson which promises to cover his life in exhausting detail.

Even the most dutiful of readers will quail before the size of Caro's work. This first volume takes us in 882 pages from Johnson's birth in 1908 to his defeat in his first Senate election campaign in 1941. The book, however, is not over-long. The reader is left satisfied but not satisfied. For Caro has written a compelling book based on unusually thorough

research. In describing Johnson's background it paints a fascinating picture of life in rural America—or at least Texas—before the advent of good roads, electricity or television. Johnson himself was a colourful character, about whom there are already numerous wonderful anecdotes, and Caro supplies us with more, which are even funnier. But he also helps us grapple with the puzzle of Johnson's career. Johnson entered politics as a poor man and became a millionaire. Caro's book promises to show us how. Johnson also seemed to manifest an extraordinary propensity to shift along the political spectrum. Starting as an ardent New Dealer, he became a conservative senator renowned for his devotion to the oil industry, a president who achieved more on civil rights than any of his predecessors this century and who may be surpassed only by Roosevelt as the creator of the American variant of the welfare state (which Reagan is now demolishing). His liberal domestic policies, however, were overshadowed in the end by his decision to involve the United States massively in the Vietnam war.

Caro's research helps explain some of the apparent paradoxes and puzzles in Johnson's life. He shows convincingly that Johnson was never a believer in the New Deal. Indeed, in private he was rather critical of it. His first Congressional campaign slogan, "Roosevelt! Roosevelt! Roosevelt!" was suggested by the wealthy interests promoting him, who sensed that the President's popularity in the district would see their candidate home. Caro shows that to the construction firms Johnson seemed the best hope for safeguarding a federally funded project on which their financial

spectacles. Yet at the same time as the uniqueness of de Gaulle is insisted upon, what is most striking about the portrayal of him in *Leaders* is his resemblance of Richard Nixon. By and large, the similarities brought to our attention are believable. It is also understandable why Nixon finds them important. Whether spelling them out makes for an interesting book is another matter.

Over the years, Nixon's enemies have made much of the fact that he is a loner. During his presidency they repeatedly accused him of suffering from some sort of psychic sickness because of his habit of withdrawing to the Lincoln sitting-room or to the small libraries at Camp David or San Clemente so that he could make important decisions in utter solitude. De Gaulle, it turns out, did likewise. "He understood how vitally important having time to think can be for a leader, and at his insistence his staff reserved several hours a day for undisturbed thought." With the cleverness that is perpetually renewed by his insecurity, Nixon defends himself against the charge of loneliness by pointing to the example of a political giant. "I tried to follow a similar pattern as President", he writes—ad theo leaves it to us to judge the psychologizing of those who hate him.

Nixon's expression of admiration for the French President's disregard of danger during the numerous attempts on his life is similarly designed to remind us of the coolness that Nixon himself displayed as Vice-President when he was attacked by a rock-throwing mob in Caracas, Venezuela. A Nixonian parallel is again in evidence. In his depiction of de Gaulle's deep devotion to his wife, Yvonne, and to his retarded daughter, Anne, for of the thousands of assassins that have been mounted on every aspect of Nixon's life, none has more outraged him—than the efforts of Jimmy Breslin and other liberal journalists to cast doubt on his closeness to his wife and daughter. Through his sentimentally written but obviously sincere salute to de Gaulle's private life—and, in a subsequent chapter, to the home-loving Ronald Reagan—Caro as well—Nixon affirms his own commitment to family values.

Of the twenty-one leaders whom Caro discusses, he reserves his highest praise for de Gaulle. "Seldom has history seen a leader whose personality combined all the admirable qualities that de Gaulle's life could be both human and heroic." Among his other virtues, the great Frenchman was "a consummate media figure" whose "indecipherable intellect and personal discipline" enabled him to deliver lengthy addresses on television without notes and without

any of the usual tricks of the trade. He was a man of few words, and he spoke with a directness and clarity that was rare in the modern world. He was a man of few words, and he spoke with a directness and clarity that was rare in the modern world. He was a man of few words, and he spoke with a directness and clarity that was rare in the modern world.

Les A. Murray

Heading for power

Graham K. Wilson

ROBERT A. CARO
The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power
 822pp. Collins. £15.
 0 00 217062 0

There is a remarkable shortage of good biographies of recent American politicians. Even presidents are rarely subjected to a full-scale biography, while the lives of those who dominate the courts, Congress and the executive agencies pass, perhaps mercifully, almost totally unmentioned. Yet this death does not reflect a belief that personality is unimportant in the American political scene. On the contrary, political scientists in recent years have paid particular attention to the character of presidents. But it is characteristic of the prestige of the presidency that doing research on the presidency that though London Johnson figures prominently in books on the importance of presidential character, no completely satisfactory biography of him has appeared. Now Robert Caro has written the first volume of a three-volume biography of Johnson which promises to cover his life in exhausting detail.

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Mixing with the giants

Kenneth S. Lynn

RICHARD NIXON
Leaders: Profiles and reminiscences of men who have shaped the modern world
 371pp. Sidgwick and Jackson.
 £10.95.
 0 283 98904 1

From James Buchanan and Ulysses S. Grant to Herbert Hoover and Jimmy Carter, unsuccessful American presidents have generally sought to restore their devastated reputations by writing books, and the most thoroughly discredited of all the ex-presidents occupies the Oval Office in a certain no exception to the rule. *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* appeared in 1978, followed by *The Nixon War* in 1980. To these volumes Nixon has now added *Leaders*, a series of portraits of Churchill, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Krushchev, and other world figures whom he came to know in politics. While objective in form, the memoir is intensely personal in every line. Simultaneously exuding self-assurance and self-doubt, it replicates the persistent psychological contradiction of the Nixon Presidency.

Like Kennedy and Johnson before him, Nixon the President was highly intelligent, fetidistically given to tough talk—and politically irresolute. Nixon the writer's sonorous invocations—to "courage" and "perseverance"—and "the test of greatness" summon up remembrances of his White House rhetoric, so does the undertone of anxiety that runs all through the book.

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survival depended and that once he was elected as a freshman Representative he handsomely rewarded the support by resolving their difficulties with the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of the Budget, and the Internal Revenue Service.

The Years of Lyndon Johnson contains a wealth of detail about the seamy side of American politics, studiously ignored by academic writers on the American political system. Johnson's fund-raising activities bear comparison with Nixon's, or with Abscam, and Caro's revelations certainly argue against any decline in standards in American politics, even though concern about campaign finance has increased. He also gives a fascinating picture of the workings of a Congressional campaign. Of course, some aspects are of only historical interest; Johnson's ham-fisted attempts to use radio in his first campaign would give much amusement to today's mass-media candidates. But his use of constituency service to build a political base (winning federal grants for the district, helping constituents in their fights with the federal bureaucracy) suggest that recent writers on this tactic have rediscovered the wheel. Caro's descriptions of Johnson's successes in manipulating federal agencies, fellow-legislators and even the President in order to secure favours, contracts and patronage for himself and his friends seem to promise that subsequent volumes will reveal much about Washington folkways.

However, one reason why Caro's book is compelling is also cause for concern. Johnson is presented as being

from an early age an lingo, if not a monster. This argument gives the book coherence. It also strains credulity a little. It may well be true that Johnson's early life contained many incidents in which he was dishonest, cruel, manipulative, domineering and cowardly. However, one wonders whether anyone's childhood could withstand the scrutiny of a Caro without grave faults emerging. Moreover, in order to emphasize the evil of his anti-hero's character, Caro sets surrounding characters in peculiarly dramatic contrast. Both Johnson's father and, improbably, Sam Rayburn are transformed into almost saintly characters inadvertently nurturing a viper. Johnson himself, according to Caro, can do right only for the wrong reason. For example, we learn that Johnson intervened successfully to save Erich Leinsdorf from the tender mercies of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, which wished to expel the refugee from Nazi Germany. Johnson thereby rendered a notable service to a humanitarian cause and to the musical life of the United States. However, Caro informs us, the apparently noble deed was done solely to advance one of Johnson's love affairs with an admirer of Leinsdorf.

Johnson, it is true, was not a likeable character. His ability to exercise power over people was based in part on some of the least likeable features of his personality. Caro is probably right that these features of Johnson's character were evident in his early twenties. However, it is unclear whether one should hope for a more balanced picture in subsequent volumes or an equally vivid picture of the monster as senator.

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Like the Nixon of yore, he also mixes in a little poison with his saccharine. Thus his compliment to Madame de Gaulle is made in terms of a comparison to another sort of woman: "Yvonne de Gaulle was no glamorous showboat, but she was every inch a lady." If the "glamorous showboat" reference causes readers to think of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, one cannot imagine that the author of *Leaders* will be sorry.

An indirect method of a somewhat different sort is employed to denigrate John Kennedy. Too uncertain about his current position in American life to criticize the martyred president as strongly as he would like, Nixon trots out the comments of other leaders as stalking horses for his own barbs. During the 1960 presidential campaign, he remembers, Adenauer was full of "uncomplimentary remarks about Senator Kennedy". In reminiscence about Douglas MacArthur, Nixon is even more generous about sharing with us a contemptuous opinion of Kennedy.

Once before the election of 1960 he spoke disparagingly of Kennedy's PT boat exploit, saying that Kennedy was "brave but very rash" and that "he could have been court-martialed for his poor judgment in the episode." In June 1961, two months after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, he was brutally critical of Kennedy. "He did not think that Kennedy had judgment—the kind of broad judgment that involves weighing all the factors before reaching a decision.... He did credit Kennedy with being 'clever' politically and attributed 'naïveté' to Kennedy's having provided MacArthur with a plane for his sentimental journey to the Philippines. But he called Kennedy 'just dumb' when it comes to decision-making."

The memoirist also does not hesitate to tell us what certain great leaders have had to say about Richard Nixon. "Thank God you are here," Nixon, the ninety-one-year-old Adenauer told him when Nixon called on the former German leader in 1967 while making a private fact-finding tour of Europe. "Your visit is like manna from heaven." Replying to the two

communications that Nixon sent to de Gaulle upon the occasion of the latter's resignation from office, the departing French leader said: "Your gracious official message and your very warm personal letter touched me deeply. Not only because you occupy the high office of President of the United States, but because they are from you, Richard Nixon, and I have for you—with good reason—esteem, confidence, and friendship as great and as sincere as it is possible to have." In his zeal to recapture historical dignity, Nixon simply cannot restrain himself from quoting these endorsements of his character, and as a result appears more undignified than ever.

Anecdotaly colourful, psychologically shallow, and factually erratic (among other historical lapses, Nixon asserts that James K. Polk, who presided over the Mexican War, was an exclusively peacetime president), the portraits in *Leaders* read like a series of cover stories in a news magazine. Only in the final chapter, where Nixon sums up his thoughts about the problems of political leadership in the contemporary world, are we reminded of how astute an observer he is. The question, for instance, of whether television has not drastically reduced the ability of democratic nations to survive against a determined totalitarian foe is discussed with a sombre authority that compels our attention.

For television, says Nixon, forces events into a soap-opera mould, and does so with such emotional force and such an enormous audience: "In attendance that it all but eclipses national debate. It especially does so, he emphasizes, in situations that lend themselves to dramatic, emotionally loaded footage of such scenes as a bleeding soldier or a hungry child. Hard choices often have to be made among different sets of painful consequences. By concentrating so powerfully on the pain from one of those sets of consequences, television badly skews the debate and, in effect, stuffs the ballot box." Unless television steps up its duty to reflect reality more accurately, he concludes, those who will be trying to lead the democratic nations in the years ahead are going to have a very difficult time.

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H. M. COLVIN (General Editor)

The History of the King's Works:
Volume IV, 1485-1660 (Part 2)
266pp. HMSO. £55.
0 11 670832 8

From the Middle Ages until 1851 the King's Works was in charge of the erection and maintenance of all royal buildings. A history of it was conceived in 1951, as a project which could be polished off in a few years. Thirty-one years later the last of six massive volumes has finally appeared. To state this is not to criticize, however. Considering the formidable quantity of source-material and the very great number of buildings involved, thirty-one years was a respectable length of time; the fact that so massive a project has been successfully brought to completion within it reflects the quiet persistence and enlightened management of the general editor, Howard Colvin.

The somewhat eccentric order in which the volumes have appeared is the result of the project's having been divided up in unequal portions among twelve authors, who have worked at different speeds. Volume IV, the last to appear, is the second of two volumes covering the period 1485-1660. The first was concerned with the organization and personnel of the Works in this period, and with the royal castles; the second deals with the remaining buildings. The period covered is one of contrasts rather than consistency. It starts with the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, a time of intensive building rising, under Henry VIII, to a peak of royal production never before or since equalled in England - although George IV did his best. The reigns of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth bring quite extraordinary inactivity, except in the realm of fortification. Finally, under James I and Charles I, royal building starts up again, though the period was more remarkable for concealing ambitious projects than for realizing them.

Elizabeth's refusal to build is one of the curiosities of her reign. In forty-five years, during which most other European monarchs were furiously at work with towers and mortar, she built a Long Gallery at Windsor, a canvas-and-wood banquet-house at Whitehall and, apart from fortifications, virtually nothing else of the slightest importance. It is true that she started her reign over-equipped with royal residences; but the fact that she largely resisted temptations to improve, rebuild or add to them, as they steadily grew out of fashion, is remarkable evidence of that closeness with money which was at once her strength and her weakness. As a result, her direct influence on the development of Elizabethan architecture was minimal. In contrast, the early Tudors and Stuarts were pace-setters. The achievements and importance of the Stuart Royal Works under Inigo Jones has been much written about, and Volume IV of the *King's Works*, although valuable for working out the complexities of royal building in the period, mainly fills out an already familiar picture. The most interesting, and largest, part of the volume is that which covers the activities of the early Tudors.

It is an extraordinary story, not least because so many of the buildings it involves have disappeared. Among the buildings that have gone, all as large or nearly as large as Hampton Court today, are Henry VII's palaces at Richmond and Woodstock; Henry VIII's palaces at Nonsuch, Oatlands, Bridewell, New Hall and Whitehall; and the great palace of Greenwich, the creation of both kings. To these must be added sizeable building works amounting in some cases to substantial new houses, at Baynard's Castle, Langley, St Augustine's, Canterbury, Dartford, Hanworth, Rochester and the Nore; a mass of embellishments at other houses; the vanished state-rooms of St James's Palace; and the magnificent rooms of the King's and Queen's sides of Hampton Court, largely replaced by Wren's new ranges.

In the seventeenth century. Moreover Henry VIII was every bit as prolific as a builder of fortifications. His work included a great belt of eighteen major and twenty-seven minor forts, stretched along the southern coast between 1539 and 1546; fortifications on the Scottish border, in Scotland and in France; and formidable town defences at places such as Hull, Portsmouth and Berwick.

All this work makes Henry VIII the dominant figure, if not the hero, of Volume IV of the *King's Works*. The great bulk of both the military and the secular architecture discussed in it is his. Henry VIII started his reign with nine residences and added four; Henry VIII started with thirteen, and ended with fifty. The interesting point is made that he lived in an interim period. Earlier moorings, in their perigons round the country, were able to park themselves on the great religious houses, many of them royal foundations and all equipped with lavish accommodation for important visitors. By dissolving the monasteries Henry VIII had greatly reduced his options, and had to fill the gaps himself. It remained for Elizabeth to discover that her richer lay subjects could take the place of the abbots.

There is something in this; but as the *King's Works* adds, Henry's houses were also evidence of his "tyrannical and acquisitive personality" and the fact that he was "a compulsive builder". In the Elizabethan *Description of England*, written by William Harrison, he is called "the only Phoenix of his time for fine and curious masonry", and a monarch, moreover, who knew how to build "after his own device". In 1532 the French ambassador reported how, whenever they came to any house of the King, "he shows it to me and tells me what he has done, and what he is going to do". In 1529 the Joiners at Hampton Court are reported to be working on the King's private closet under his personal direction "upon all such privy conceits which were devised there by his grace". To judge the end result of this is hard, because so much has gone, mostly without visual record. The situation would have been even worse but for one piece of luck. Philip of Spain, during his few years as King-Cousort of England, decided to commission paintings of all his palaces, including the English ones. Accordingly the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck was dispatched to England. The paintings have disappeared; but drawings of Whitehall, Richmond, Oatlands, Nonsuch, Greenwich, Baynard's Castle and Hampton Court survive.

When to these are added whatever else there is in the way of plans and illustrative material, the buildings that still stand and the mass of documentary evidence, the picture that emerges is a mixed one. Perhaps the dominating impression is one of profusion combined with lack of discipline. With the one exception of Nonsuch, the places were huge and shapeless, grouped round straggling big courts and a confused warren of small ones. Splendid episodes were provided by elaborate towers or lanterns, or the magnificence of a hall, chapel or kitchen, but they were seldom related. From the point of view of architectural quality and inventiveness, the buildings of Henry VIII - his chapel at Westminster, his tower at Windsor and his palace at Richmond - stand well above those of Henry VIII. If one early Tudor palace could be resurrected, I would unhesitatingly choose Richmond, in preference even to Nonsuch, curious and extraordinary though the latter must have been. In many aspects Henry VIII's palaces seem merely to repeat, in a less discriminating way, ideas and motifs inherited from his father. Architecturally their main achievement was to overlay the basic language of Henry VII's times with early Renaissance motifs. The resulting ornament could, to judge from what survives, be exquisite and probably expressed Henry VIII's particular enthusiasms; that huge and terrible man seems to have been at his best devising delicate incrustations for tiny jewel-like closets.

But as a patron and instigator of buildings, Henry VIII shows up best in connection with military architecture. Here again there is no doubt of his personal involvement, an involvement even greater than that with his palaces. In 1541 reference is made to his "most excellent knowledge in devising all kinds of fortifications", and again and again individual details are said to have been built according to his "device". His role is persuasively categorized as follows by the *King's Works*: "we must see the king out, certainly, as a draftsman, but as a copiously and deferentially referred-to expert".

His fortifications form part of a Northern European episode in the history of military architecture which was to be superseded by the new ideas being developed in Italy as they were built. They are, however, no less remarkable for the fact that they were so soon to go out of fashion. The dominant philosophy behind them was one of maximum fire-power for artillery. Forts like Walmer, Sandown and Deal were designed like complex double or triple flowers; but the petals of each rising circuit were built to bristle with the maximum number of cannon, cumulatively pointing in every direction. The result is not only of great interest to military historians, but visually captivating for the layman, especially as depicted in plan form or in the contemporary aerial views reproduced in the *King's Works*. The decorative value of the latter suggests that, even at the time military architecture was supplemented by a delight which can only be called aesthetic. It leads one to wonder to what extent the complexities of the more fanciful Elizabethan or Jacobean buildings were inspired by Henrician fortifications. There is no very close analogy, because the functional requirements of forts and houses were so different; but a whole group of

houses, lodges or pavilions, of which Thorpe's design for a triangular house is the best known, show a similar delight in complex geometrical plans. An interesting step could have been provided by buildings such as the five banqueting houses, resembling a cluster of forts, which overlooked the tiltyard at Hampton Court and are shown in one of Wynaerde's drawings. The combination of generous windows with semicircular bays and towers is suggestive of much Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture.

The evidence assembled in the book indicates a good few other possible precedents in vanished royal buildings, both for non-royal early Tudor buildings and for Elizabethan and Jacobean ones. The sensational palace at Layer Marney, for instance, with its counterpart between the bay windows of the three-storeyed east and the eight storeys of the west wing of it, seems to reflect a similar arrangement on the river front of Richmond. If, as is possible, the king's apartments were up on the second floor of the great central block at Richmond, a prototype emerges in the second-floor staircases of houses such as Hardwick. The Hampton prospect-room which rises above the roof-line of Melbury in Dorset was the inspiration of the colossal prospect tower at Oatlands. Elizabethan and Jacobean ornamental ceilings are essentially variations carried out in plaster of the fan-vaulted timber ceilings in Henry VIII's staterooms. The Elizabethan log gallery is without any doubt a descendant of early Tudor galleries at Richmond, Hampton Court and elsewhere, the nature and dating of which is worked out for the first time in full detail in the *King's Works*.

Although the importance of the galleries as prototypes is also pointed out, in general the *King's Works* devotes little space to the stylistic planning background and influence of royal buildings. The illustrations, as previous volumes are, are limited in number; and although these volumes have been much point in index photographs of the familiar exterior of Hampton Court and St James's, comprehensive photographic records of the surviving interior detail in the royal buildings would have been useful to have. For the first time in the series the volume contains a short but interesting section on the contemporary planning of royal palaces, the reasons behind it. But on the whole, like its predecessors, it is concerned with establishing the facts about the Royal Works as an organization, and working out what was built where and when and by whom. This reflects the interest of its editor, and he has the word "In concentrating their energies on the sufficiently formidable task of writing the history of the Works, the authors of this *History* have at least avoided the characteristic fate of operative books, which is not to achieve publication at all."

The Beech

Blizzards have brought down the beech tree That, through twenty years, had served As landmark or as limit to our walk: We sat among its roots when buds Fruillike in their profusion tipped the twigs - A galaxy of black against a sky that soon Leaf-layers would shut back. The naked tree Commanded, manned the space before it And beyond, dark lightnings of its branches Played above the winter desolation: It seemed their charge had set the grass alight As a low sun shot its fire into the valley Splitting the shadows open. Today that sun Shows you the place unshaded, A wrecked town centred by no spire, Scattered and splintered wide. At night As the wind comes feeling for those boughs There is nothing now in the dark of an answering strength: No form to confront and to attest The amplitude of dawning spaces as when The tower rebuilt itself out of the mist each morning.

Charles Tomlinson

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Howard Hibbard

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JOSEPH ALSOP

The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and its linked phenomena
691pp, plus black-and-white plates.
Thames and Hudson, £30.
0500233359 4

Organized collecting, which has come to embrace almost anything — from Botticelli to barbed wire — is one of man's odder obsessions. Joseph Alsop reminds us that far from being normal human behaviour our mania for collecting *objets d'art* has been shared by few other societies during the millennia of man's existence. With a strange combination of wary detachment and delighted involvement, Alsop emphasizes the "essential irrationality of human collecting" as a behavioural trait. The few collectors in the animal kingdom can be shown to do so for a purpose. The bower bird, for example, decorating its elaborately constructed nest with a collection of bright scraps, is advertising for a wife, and "a male bird that is a bad architect or negligent collector has much less chance of getting a mate". It is difficult to see any biological motive behind human collecting. Alsop does sow the idea that "the art market is to art as warehouses are to sex", but at least the energy expended in a warehouse is related to a biologically productive activity.

I don't wish to suggest that Alsop indulges in a crude knockabout, but he does attack his subject with uninhibited and provocative verve, making a series of large general points about the nature of collecting itself, in a way which art historians have been reluctant to do. At the same time, he loses nothing to professional historians in detailed documentation. Alsop, a

distinguished American journalist and political commentator who has passed his seventieth year, writes as an amateur in the best sense — bursting with enthusiasm, less circumscribed by the accepted, safe proprieties of orthodox art history than professional academia, and able to cast something of an outsider's eye on the whole system which constitutes art collecting.

He recognizes the characteristic practices of art collecting (which he differentiates sharply from art patronage) in only five civilizations: classical antiquity, China, Japan, Islam to a limited degree, and later Western art. These are his "rare art traditions". His peculiar and to my mind unsatisfactory title does not therefore mean "the rare-art traditions", but the "rare art-traditions" (compared to "normal art-traditions"). Or perhaps it means "the rare 'Art' traditions". He ambitiously aims to document in detail the rise of collecting in these traditions, to establish general criteria and definitions for the activity of collecting, to extract the features shared by the traditions, and finally to attempt a global explanation of the common factor which lies behind institutionalized collecting in such apparently diverse cultures.

This is, of course, an enormous task, and Alsop has found it necessary to produce a volume of approaching 700 pages, which he has armed with a bibliography of some 1500 items. Reading all these would be a Herculean labour for an academic on sabbatical. For a veteran journalist it is incredible. The author explains, however, that he organized a cottage industry of researchers, employing seventeen assistants, with Ulrich Middeldorf as "presiding godfather". He also acknowledges the help of no fewer than 192 art historians, whose communications are held in his files.

Such an aggregation of borrowed learning sounds like a recipe for disaster, but somehow Alsop has held the whole thing together by the sheer force of his personality and attitudes. The structure of the book is like a great Victorian country house, replete with curious antiquarian details, rambling corridors, innumerable rooms decorated in a variety of styles, capacious closets, grand staircases and noisy plumbing, but all nicely well adapted to its complex functions and presenting an imposing spectacle when viewed from a distance.

Alsop's main thesis hangs on a series of "definitions", "laws" and "tests", all of which are sane and workable, even when his philosophical equipment is short of sophistication to handle the most tricky implications of the terms he uses. The most important of the premises on which he proceeds are as follows (but not in his order): "art collecting invariably prizes loose whatever is collected from its former functional context, and deprives it of significant social purpose"; "the potential usefulness of a work of art is never a serious consideration for a true collector"; "an art collector is concerned only with buying something for the production of which he has been in no way responsible"; "to be successful, an art collector must be a connoisseur, or must hire connoisseurship"; "art collectors' categories are created by collectors"; "the collectors' category is always controlling, since art collectors require their prizes to belong to the correct category"; And, subsuming all these is his general definition: "to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy; and art collecting is a form of collecting in which the category is, broadly speaking, works of art". The primary characteristic of true collecting is "quite simply, that collectors enjoy it... for what mainly delights them is gaining possession of their prizes". If these definitions seem rather circular this reflects his view of the nature of collecting as a useless activity which is an end in itself.

Armed with these criteria, Alsop finds a common historical blueprint in his rare art traditions: "first, a special way of thinking about art", most notably in terms of the ideas of "Art" and "Artist"; "second, art collecting, art history and the art market; and third, the secondary byproducts of art", museums and related institutions, dealers, auctions, superlatives, forgeries, etc. The validity of this blueprint is obviously only as good as the evidence on which it is based. I suspect that most historians will by now have felt tempted to draw upon their arsenal of detailed information to knock holes in Alsop's edifice. After a few chapters I began to do precisely that, but as the historical progression unfolded so I was progressively if not wholly disarmed by the wealth of substantiated evidence which the author has marshalled and by the force with which his case is sustained. Occasionally a conclusion is reached with a bold confidence which the cited evidence does not justify, but the general level of argument is impressive.

The real test for this Western-orientated reviewer came with the chapters on the Renaissance and its aftermath, which comprise the most substantial sections of the historical exegesis. None of Alsop's large body of evidence is essentially new but he seems to have overlooked remarkably little of significance given the range of published material. The only azeable topics I missed were the rise of private collectors, and artists themselves as a special category of collector. The main story is well told. He has thought of a number of major personalities to life (only Savonarola is caricatured) making pungent observations and suggesting a number of new hypotheses. Not all his ideas are as secure as he would like, but they are never negligently formed.

It would, for instance, be nice and not implausible to believe that Niccolò Niccoli was the pioneer collector of classical objects as early as 1390-1400, and Alsop does his best to make his argument stick, but a good deal of retrospective pleading is involved. There is no doubt, however, that the acribic Niccoli was in at the basement of antique collecting. The famous *caldedonio*, admired by Ghiberti, entered Niccoli's collection for five florins, left it for 200 and was valued at 1,500 in Lorenzo's magnificent posthumous inventory — a gain of 300 per cent in less than a century. There is also some uncomfortable stretching of evidence in his eulogistic promotion of Cosimo de' Medici to such a point of unrivalled eminence in the history of Renaissance collecting, but here I am prepared to go a good deal of the way with Alsop. The problem with the evidence is not simply the lacunae, but that many of the documents that survive are being pressed to yield information and support analyses of a kind which are generally inconsistent and often in conflict with the rationale behind each document's original compilation. The famous and much-exploited 1492 inventory of the Medici Palace is a conspicuous case in point.

In common with other commentators, Alsop makes great play with the modest valuations of Renaissance art compared to the classical antiquities and even utilitarian items. Only one painting, the "Adoration of the Kings" attributed in the inventory to Fra Angelico, is valued as high as 100 florins, while the Tazza Farnese, an antique sardonyx cameo, is recorded as high as 10,000 florins. A number of important paintings (in modern auctioneers' argot) are estimated at no more than a feathered with two pillows. Alsop takes these valuations as accurately reflecting the relative value placed on Renaissance and antique art by even the most enlightened patron-collectors. Yet, this is to fail to recognize what the document can properly tell us in relation to its original function.

What it tells us, no more and no less, is the realizable financial value of an enormous assembly of diverse items in the opinion of the compiler(s) of the inventory. It deals with the estimated market value of the objects, not with a graded scale of the relative importance, significance, aesthetic worth or non-financial value placed on the items by their Medicean owners. Nor does it indicate the amount paid by the patron to the artist. Alsop's idea of the inventor(s) of the Medici Bank for the original cost of almost a century of family patronage is faintly absurd. The value of 20 florins each for Pollaiuolo's great *Hercules* paintings in the Sala Grande should not be taken as their original cost or as an indication that Lorenzo would have happily swapped them for a couple of cloaks, but that the re-sale value of second-hand paintings, probably built into their surroundings, was low. There simply was no developed market; prospective purchasers of a major picture would expect to order a tailor-made work from their best master available to him, and there was no shortage of supply in fifteenth-century Florence.

Classical objects were exorbitantly expensive not only because they were appreciated and fashionable, but because there was a finite supply and only a very few objects in the top category. It is so very different from the gap between a top Velasquez portrait (\$5,400,000 in 1970) and a commissioned Hockney?

Any discussion of such matters inevitably becomes entangled with questions of aesthetic worth, and the symbols between monetary and artistic value. Who can honestly say that a picture does not look different when we are shown that it is a worthless forgery? Our aesthetic judgment of an object is continuously and irredeemably compromised by what we know about it. Art history plays an important role in all this. Alsop reminds us how much less valued every *annus* was the "Apollo Belvedere" once the distinction between Greek original and Roman copy had been formulated in the nineteenth century.

A prestigious list of top-name old masters is certified by "those who did find it thoroughly enjoyable, and warmly welcome the bold challenge it has laid down."

Fine Art's ill-fated desire to possess a Raphael. Such a desire dates back to the Renaissance itself. As early as 1470s Giovanni Ruellius was boasting for his sons' benefit of the major masters whose works he possessed (in which Alsop laboriously underlines) Isabella d'Este in 1498 asked to borrow a Leonardo portrait to compare with an example by Bellini (an incident overlooked by Alsop). This evidence of her precocious interest in the individual styles of Renaissance masters, and is all of a piece with her willingness to waive her normally strict stipulations about subject in her efforts to obtain a Leonardo and a Bellini. Similarly her son, Federico Gonzaga, was determined to obtain a Raphael but was fobbed off with a copy of a Sarto replica. Paintings began to be suitable gifts on an international scale, a topic which has eluded Alsop's attention. Most remarkable Cardinal Bibbiena's 1518 gift of Raphael's "Giovanis of Aragon" to Francis I, not because the French King wanted a portrait of that particular sitter but because it was a picture of a supreme Italian beauty by the supreme Italian painter of beauty.

Arising from such detailed matters is the general question: "Why these art traditions and not all the countless others?" The answer Alsop hazards, warning that it "is the best I can do," is that "the nourishing cultures of the art traditions were alone those whose evidence of what may be called a developed historical sense." But if we admit this diagnosis (and it takes a good deal of admitting) why did these particular cultures develop a special kind of historical and artistic awareness?

I suspect that one of the preconditions of both the production of historical writing and consciousness of art as Art is the rise and consolidation of a substantial professional, administrative, secularized, "civil service" class, for whom analytic history is a vital support; whose existence as a professional and social functionaries depends upon a complex, susceptible to rational analysis and some measure of prediction. The professional elite is buttressed by a sense of intellectual understanding and high literacy, which tends to foster a matching sense of style and culture, marks of its virtue.

I do not mean this in a crude, deterministic manner, or that such values can only arise in this way, but that the concepts of history and style are shown to have social functions in such a context, and collecting becomes a less wholly pointless than Alsop is at pains to emphasize. Collecting such pains to emphasize links with individual sense of his place in society, as well as satisfying an urge to create whatever aesthetic and psychological riches may exist. It can also go further than this. The great American collectors, whose activities have undoubtedly coloured Alsop's definitions of collecting, are not asserting their financial power, but cultural status through their collections, but also investing in posterity. Just as the Medici hoped to buy external exaltation from the site of art, so the Mellons are building a place in the immortal gallery of art and benefaction. The collections they thus acquire social functions every bit as definable and real as those for which they were originally created.

Any group of professional academics will probably react uneasily when an outsider intrudes robustly into one of their fields, particularly when the outsider's work transcends the accepted norms in its presentation and acceptance. And there is no shortage of antagonistic features in Alsop's work. It is essentially planned, with a series of "interchapters", and no least references to the plates. It contains a strong sense of the author's personality, and contains a greater amount of first-person writing than is normal in historical analysis. It is crisscrossed with incidental and tangential material, and it does not always seem longwindedness and repetition. But it did find it thoroughly enjoyable, and warmly welcome the bold challenge it has laid down.

A prestigious list of top-name old masters is certified by "those who did find it thoroughly enjoyable, and warmly welcome the bold challenge it has laid down."

THEATRE

Peasant realities and poetic myths

John Elsom

J. M. SYNGE

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TONI O'BRIEN JOHNSON

Synges The Medieval and the Celtic
200pp, Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, £9.50.
0 86140 140 2

J.M. Synge's plays, admittedly few in number, were written within a span of under ten years. He began his apprenticeship effort, *The Shadow of the Glen*, in 1900; and died in 1909, with *The Riders of the Sorrows* left unfinished. He had little previous experience of the theatre, even as a spectator. His diaries for the 1890s record only two visits, to see Beethoven's *Hamlet* in Dublin in 1892 and *Chorus* at Antoinette's Theatre Libre in 1898. Like many of his contemporaries, he disdained the commercial theatre "with its stultifying vulgar characters".

The lack of a stage background made the surge of creative energy all the more remarkable, for in those nine years Synge became not only a fine, painstaking and innovative dramatist, but a practical man of the theatre in other ways too. He could visualize a

scene in great detail. When W. G. Fay, the Abbey Theatre actor, asked him about a passage in *The Shadow of the Glen*, "Was Dan standing where he is on the right, behind the table?" Synge replied, "No, he was on the right-hand side of the table with his hand on it. Such advice is rarely asked from a dramatist, and more seldom still accepted."

Although he had, according to W. B. Yeats, "a kind of narrow, intense personality", and always retained an aloofness, Synge immersed himself in the Abbey's affairs for months at a time, seeking seclusion only to write his plays. In 1906, as an Abbey director, he opposed the move to transform the Irish National Theatre Society into a municipal theatre on continental lines. In a perceptive memorandum to Yeats, he distinguished between a "creative" dramatic movement "where the interest is in the novelty and power of the new work rather than in the quality of execution" and "a highly organized executive undertaking... where the interest lies in a more and more perfect interpretation of works that are already received as classics".

That distinction still holds good; and, more particularly, it reveals that Synge knew the strengths and weaknesses of the Abbey company, that he did not want them to be seduced into a premature rivalry with the major European repertory companies and that he was drawn towards the new wave of literary theatre, which had spread across Europe during the previous twenty years. These theatres included the Theatre Libre, the Freie Bühne and the Court Theatre under Granville Barker; and they were renowned not for their patriotism but for their independence and realism. While some Abbey colleagues aspired towards providing a cultural flagship for the Irish nation, Synge pulled in another direction. Yeats likened the impact of Synge's plays to that of Ibsen's in the 1880s; and it is a tribute to Synge's strength of character, and to

the support he earned from Yeats and Lady Gregory, that the company stood loyally by him in the furious rows which developed over *The Playboy of the Western World*.

In England, however, we do not readily link Synge with Ibsen, or the Abbey Theatre with the Theatre Libre; and the realistic side of Synge's writing has been overshadowed by the tougher, urban naturalism of O'Casey. We prefer to remember the melodious lyricism of his dialogue, as if it were a higher form of blarney; and a delicate mixture of fable and observation, frankness and circumlocution, farce and tragedy passes us by. Synge did not pursue beauty like a butterfly hunter. "A dramatist," he said to Yeats, "has to express his subject and to find as much beauty as is compatible with that, and if he does more, he is an aesthete."

The fascination of this new four-volume edition of his works is that for the first time we can see how all the different elements in Synge's writing were brought together. In addition to providing much previously unpublished material, including *The Moon has Set*, fragments of early verse plays and several scenarios, it contains different versions of poems or speeches from plays, culled from Synge's notebooks, so that we can feel the processes through which he worked to discover his distinctive voice.

It is like wandering into a chemical laboratory and if we are at first bemused by all those tubes and pipettes, an accompanying critical study by Toni O'Brien Johnson, *Synges The Medieval and the Celtic*, provides an extremely useful account, without contradicting the prevailing view that Synge's meeting with Yeats in Paris in 1896 and his subsequent visits to the Aran Islands to learn Gaelic, from 1898 onwards, gave the spur to his later endeavours. Synge's interest in folklore began before then, with his studies at the Sorbonne under two professors of medieval literature, Henri d'Arbois

de Jubainville and Louis Petit de Julleville; and their influence directed him towards certain recurring themes, such as the beheadings in *Bricur's Feast* (and in its English variant, *Sir Gwynn and the Green Knight*), which subsequently affected the conception of *Playboy*, a modern, comic version.

Synges went to the Aran Islands not as a Gaelic revivalist but as a medieval scholar, not as a nationalist seeking his roots but as a French or even English folk historian. Once there, as his celebrated collection of essays reveals, the beauty and simplicity of the place and its inhabitants won his love; and although he was never blind to the poverty, deprivation and injustices of western Ireland, he sometimes describes the region almost as an Eden before the Fall, which in his case meant the sprawl of urban industrialization. He revelled in the athleticism of the girls, the colours of the cloths and, above all, in the story-telling; but he was never so intoxicated by a William Morris-like dream of crafts and fair, complexities that he forgot to describe how a drop in the price of kelp could reduce towns and villages to starvation. His political observations, such as they are, in both *The Aran Islands* and *In West Kerry*, err on the side of practicality rather than polemic.

Johnson also illustrates how Synge discovered and developed that rich dialect which he uses to such perfection in his plays and which startled Yeats by its unfamiliarity. In part, it was the result of straight imitation: Synge always claimed that some of his more startlingly poetic phrases had been borrowed untouched from the islands. But it was also the attempt to seek a hybrid between Irish, "a noun-constructed language", and English, which is not some of the more characteristic elements of the dialect come from the Gaelic, conscious in Synge's case, to seek English equivalents for Irish usages. Synge's contribution was to enhance the musicality of what could otherwise have seemed a merely cumbersome use of language.

But clearer illustrations of his developing style come from Synge's poems and translations, which begin with rather pallid Wordsworthian imitations from 1892. "O river couldst thou make response in words? What questions I should ask of old time!" — but cast off this heavy ancestry to discover a succinct simplicity. "In a nook That opened south," ran a love poem to Molly Allgood, written two

years before his death, "You and I Lay mouth to mouth." The final versions of some poems are the result of a little editorial guesswork, but since Skeleton also prints earlier sketches, the reader is drawn into the process of composition, if only to check whether Skelton is right.

What emerges is that by 1902, the *annus mirabilis* when Synge abandoned his verse plays, wrote *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen* and began *The Tinker's Wedding*, he suddenly found himself in command of a rich and flexible literary style, unlike that of any other writer of the time. On the basis of this new confidence with language he could direct his attention away from the falsely heroic legends of the Celtic revival (which now seem more Pre-Raphaelite than Hibernian), away too from the milky quiver of leopards and shillies popularized in Dion Boucicault's plays, towards a singularly honest and vital account of Irish country life. Even in *The Well of the Saints* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, both based on folk tales, he roughens up the surfaces, so that peasant realities emerge from the poetic myths.

In a letter to James Paterson, written in 1907, Synge pointed out that "the crimeless, virtuous side of Irish life is well known and cannot be disputed. The wilder — the Rabalaisian side of the Irish temperament is so wild it cannot be dealt with in book or periodical that is intended for Irish readers." Far more than the particular controversies over the word "shifts" or whether Pagan actually closed the door to the room where she slept, Dublin audiences resented the lack of easy sentimentality in *The Playboy of the Western World* and Synge's temerity in including wildness as part of the play's texture. Nowadays perhaps we would be more impressed by Synge's control of that wildness, letting it run towards neither sensationalism nor farce.

Few writers with Synge's limited production could sustain the degree of critical attention accorded within this edition; and it is helpful to look again at the biography by David H. Greens and Edward M. Stephens, which Skeleton commends in his introduction. But the results are worth the labour. The study is an invigorating one, of a writer whose technical preoccupations, social vision and historical concerns merged into one clear stream of activity, if only for a few brief years.

Striving to impose

Ronald Hayman

Ronald Speirs
Brecht's Early Plays
224pp, Macmillan, £20.
0 333 28855 6
Graham Bartram and Anthony Waite (Editors)
Brecht in Perspective
231pp, Longman, £5.95.
0 582 49205 X

The first line of Brecht's third play, *In the Jungle of Cilicia*, is: "If we read the sign right, this is a lending library." The librarian, Garga, is willing to lend books to the Malayan timber merchant, Shink, but not to sell his own. How seriously are we to take a book called *Brecht's Early Plays* if it describes Garga as a bookseller?

Certainly a study of the early plays was badly needed, though a close analysis of the five plays written between 1918 and 1925 — *Baal*, *Drums in the Night*, *Jungle*, *Edward II* and *Man is Man* — might have been more valuable than a book which spreads its net so wide. In 188 pages (not counting the notes) Ronald Speirs goes much further, offering a penultimate chapter on *The Threepenny Opera*, and when an outsider intrudes robustly into one of their fields, particularly when the outsider's work transcends the accepted norms in its presentation and acceptance. And there is no shortage of antagonistic features in Alsop's work. It is essentially planned, with a series of "interchapters", and no least references to the plates. It contains a strong sense of the author's personality, and contains a greater amount of first-person writing than is normal in historical analysis. It is crisscrossed with incidental and tangential material, and it does not always seem longwindedness and repetition. But it did find it thoroughly enjoyable, and warmly welcome the bold challenge it has laid down.

Dr Speirs is right to reject Ernst Schumacher's narrow-minded Marxist reading of his early work. He is an obstacle to any understanding of these plays in their own terms, and in relation to the views he held at the time of writing them. But this does not exonerate Speirs from his early revision of the texts. The Brecht who planned yet another revision of

best chapter is his introduction, which makes some useful comments on *The Bible*, the short play. The introduction also shows a good understanding of the young Brecht's exhortations to impose himself on everything and everyone around him. In 1920 he wrote in his diary: "I wish all things to be handed over to me, including power over all animals, and give as the reason for my demand the fact that I am only present once." But during the war, the schoolboy Brecht who wrote patriotic journalism for the Augsburg newspaper was not as single-minded as Speirs makes him out to be, and it is disappointing that Speirs devotes less than 13 pages to *Baal*, a play crucial to an understanding of the early Brecht. The points made in the introduction, which draws on the diaries, could have been developed in relation to this, the most autobiographical of all Brecht's plays, though each successive revision made it more impersonal. The original play (1918), directly reflects Brecht's close relationship with his mother. He rewrote it in 1919 and again in 1920-22. In 1926 he tried to do away with the subjective element, looking at events as they might have been reported in a newspaper. He re-titled the play *Life Story of the Man Baal*.

Speirs is wrong, I think, to sidestep this question of revision, which is central if we are to understand how Brecht functioned as a playwright. His scripts were never finished. He constantly tested them out on friends and the most casual of acquaintances, encouraging suggestions and incorporating the best of these into revisions. It is true that, as Speirs writes, "Brecht's later revision of his texts stemmed from his changed ideological position in the interim. His Marxist 'corrections' of his early work are an obstacle to any understanding of these plays in their own terms, and in relation to the views he held at the time of writing them." But this does not exonerate Speirs from his early revision of the texts. The Brecht who planned yet another revision of

Baal, to be called *The Evil Baal*, the *Assolvi Man* was a Marxist; the Brecht who wrote *Life Story of the Man Baal* was not. The work was done at the beginning of 1926 for a production by the Junges Bühne, and it was only at the end of the year that Brecht, frustrated in his work on *Josef Fleischhacker* and *The Downfall of the Egoist Johann Faizer*, started to read *Das Kapital*. (In the informed opinion of Hans Eisler, he never got beyond the first volume.)

Speirs has also contributed a chapter on "Brecht in the German Democratic Republic" to *Brecht in Perspective*, edited by Graham Bartram and Anthony Waite. Their purpose, they say, is "to furnish material for the understanding of Brecht as a historical individual, reacting to the major political and social events and ideological currents of his time and working within particular theatrical and aesthetic traditions". So long as it did not obscure the extent to which he was working against theatrical and aesthetic traditions, such a book could have been valuable, but Brecht's playwrighting was rooted in his balladry — one of his basic ideas for *Baal* — based on Villon, and songs are integral to nearly all his plays — so I think it was a mistake to leave out the question of his relationship to poetic traditions. The book contains some useful chapters on the historical background, but Brecht's theatrical precursors are treated mainly in an 18-page chapter which is too much like a textbook summary. Max Spall's book *Brecht's Tradition* is still the best source on this subject, and the author of the chapter does not even list it in his bibliography.

On April 14 Methuen will be reprinting James K. Lyons's *Brecht and America* (408pp, £5.95, 0 413 51060 3) in paperback. D. J. Enright reviewing it in the *TLN* (January 16, 1981) wrote that of Brecht's "exile" years in the United States Lyons "tells us all... or even more than all" in some departments, drawing on unpublished letters and documents, FBI files and interviews.

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The totalitarian seducers

James Joll

KARL DIETRICH BRACHER

Zeit der Ideologen: Eine Geschichte politischer Denksysteme im 20. Jahrhundert

414pp. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 3 421.06114 9

For the past twenty years social scientists have been announcing the end of the ideological age and have drawn some comfort from the fact, since if the divisions in the world are purely political rather than ideological it might be possible to end some of them. In fact, as Karl Dietrich Bracher shows in this ambitious, wide-ranging and provocative book, the opposite has happened and ideologies have become secular religions so that the resulting conflicts are no bitter as any caused by earlier sectarian quarrels.

Professor Bracher has written a history of the last eighty years in terms of the recurrent ideological conflicts and the emotional attitudes produced by the political and social changes in twentieth-century Europe. It is not a history of political philosophy and there is little discussion of abstract topics such as sovereignty, equality or justice: the work of John Rawls, for instance, is barely mentioned. It is rather an analysis of intellectual and emotional reactions to the problems raised by what Bracher calls "eine grosse Auseinandersetzung zwischen liberalen und totalitären Demokratiebewegungen". This confrontation between democracy and totalitarianism is the main theme of the book. Bracher starts with a clear and straightforward account of familiar topics—the crisis of liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of a new internationalism and a new racist nationalism, the origins of Fascism and the impact of the Russian revolution—and shows how the experience of the First World War transformed what before 1914 had been intellectual concepts into practical political mass movements.

There were in fact, Bracher argues, three answers to the problems of the post-war world: Marxist Communism, Fascism and National Socialism, and liberal democracy. At first, it looked as though it was liberal democracy which had triumphed: the democratic systems of Britain, France and the United States had survived the strains of war; the liberal ideas of President Wilson seemed to be about to provide the basis for a new liberal international order. Yet not only did the attempt to apply the principle of the national self-determination of peoples create as many problems as it solved and contribute to the nationalist resentments which underlay the various fascist movements of Europe, but also the failure of democratic governments to solve the social and economic difficulties of the 1920s and 30s created a mood of self-doubt, of *Kulturpessimismus*, which led to a loss of nerve among democrats everywhere, to the advantage of their totalitarian opponents.

For all the difference between fascist or authoritarian dictatorships and communist rule, Bracher believes that nevertheless the similarities are of profound importance, not just in the practical consequences for the inhabitants of communist and fascist states, but because each type of system demands complete submission to a monolithic ideology and an all-powerful state. These similarities, Bracher thinks, can be partly attributed to "the political ambivalence of the idea of progress" and to the contradictions in the ideological heritage of the two great inspirers of modern political thinking, Rousseau and Hegel. For many of the believers in progress, progress can only be the result of a violent overthrow of the existing system whether by war or revolution, and such violence is necessarily total: the progress it is supposed to serve. Hegel believed that progress was the realization of freedom, but that freedom could only be realized within an all-powerful, all-demanding State. Rousseau's belief in the virtues of the noble savage contributed eventually to the move-

ments which were to undermine the stability of industrial society and bourgeois democracy, while the idea of the general will underlies the worst totalitarian systems, however hypocritically it may be invoked.

Much of this is familiar from the work of J. L. Talmon and others, but Bracher uses his earlier detailed researches into the origins and nature of the National Socialist state in Germany to give telling examples to reinforce his arguments and to show how Hitler's régime was the final expression of many contradictory earlier movements:

What descended upon Europe was not only the intellectual "Revolution of Nihilism" but also a cleverly instigated "Revolt of the Masses", inspired by resentment against the modern world and described as the antidote to the *Kulturpessimismus* from which it sprang. . . . In Hitler's struggle against the "racially inferior" and the Jews, in his scientific and technological policies of destruction of those "whose fault it all was" . . . western civilization with all its contradictions was itself to be struck down.

Just as the First World War, fought by the Allies in the name of democracy and peace and by the Germans in the name of a higher *Kultur*, failed to produce the better world which it was hoped would follow, so the results of the Second World War were equally discouraging. Although Bracher sees a hopeful attempt to reformulate and reinvigorate democratic theory in Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*—"a declaration of war on the great ideological dogmas, on closed systems of thought . . . against the totalitarian seducers and despots"—reinforced by the "sketches of a philosophy of freedom" by thinkers as different as Karl Jaspers and Isaiah Berlin, thirty years later the battle still has to be fought all over again. "The

strength and attraction of monolithic thought", Bracher writes,

is clearly linked to the need for great goals and emotional values in politics. A longing to transcend the compromises and predominantly national considerations which determine the politics of pluralistic democracies is above all growing in the industrial states, whose elementary needs are partly satisfied, partly pushed to the limits of growth. There are signs of a new romantic idealism. Whether this will be mobilized or whether the weight of the warnings of the historical experience in the century of totalitarianism will be enough to keep it within bounds is hard to predict.

Bracher has found that his earlier analysis and investigation of National Socialism was reinforced by his experience of the violence of the student revolt of 1968 and the new ideological trends of the 1970s. As a result he finds himself close to those old liberals in America who have become neo-conservatives. His conclusions are therefore pessimistic: Socialism with a human face, he believes, shown itself to be an illusion; authoritarian nationalism ends in the horrors of National Socialism. How can "a pluralistic democracy with its constitutions and rules of the game" hope to safeguard humane values without damaging them to the process? The question is left unanswered except in so far as Bracher believes that a struggle for political values must be a struggle about political methods and practice in which it is the means alone which will justify the end.

Bracher has written a history of ideas in the twentieth century which presents a lucid argument free from obscurantism and jargon. He largely succeeds in roasting some of the shifting and contradictory changes—changes of mood as much as of theory—of the past twenty years by drawing attention to

the parallels between the forms of our own *Kulturpessimismus* and that of the 1920s. He leaves out many of the writers of whom he disapproves: European countries—the ideas of ideological grounds, dismissing Gramsci as overestimated, for example, and refusing to take any neo-Marxist developments very seriously. Yet for all his emphasis on the practical and empirical he does not face one of the fundamental problems of twentieth-century politics, in that he says nothing about the economic structure of our society or the attempts that have been and are being made, for instance by social-democratic governments, to ameliorate it.

The sense which many people have in the 1980s that Western society is in some sort of dead-end comes not merely from disillusionment about political doctrines but also from the structure of the capitalist system and the sense that our choices are often as limited by the policies of large corporations as they are by the policies of governments. Moreover, the economic orthodoxies of earlier decades, notably those deriving from Keynes, which seemed to enable Western societies to overcome some of the weaknesses of the capitalist system, do not seem to be working any more. And, at least in Britain and the United States, the adoption by conservative governments of a new doctrinaire economic theory may well produce practical hardships and injustices likely to be more disruptive of the stability of society than vague discontent about the workings of democratic institutions. Liberal democratic systems still have in many countries to solve the problems of economic injustice; and it is their failure to do so which makes people believe that only a revolutionary change can improve their lot.

Any writer of a general account of political ideas and attitudes in the twentieth century finds it hard to relate the experiences of the developed countries to those of the Third World

and occasionally Bracher seems to neglect both the indigenous contributions to political thought of the non-European countries—the ideas of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave or Jayaprakash Narayan, for example—and the political effects on the imperialist countries of the loss of their colonies. Terrorist methods originated by nationalist movements in the struggle against foreign rule (notably not just a feature of our own time, as it was after all nationalist terrorists who in June 1914 started the crisis which led to the First World War) have been taken up by other international movements with very different goals. Sometimes this is the result of a sense of guilt about the colonial past as well as a desire for intense political sensations, a kind of political drug-addiction among the young. How far is this new phenomenon the result of the complex effects of the end of European empires? It is perhaps a question which at least merits consideration. Although Bracher conscientiously says something about developments outside Europe and North America—in Latin America and elsewhere—he does not really discuss the ways in which older European ideologies have become transformed when applied to very different societies.

The experiences of the twentieth century have been so varied, its ideologies so shifting and contradictory, its prophets—Max Weber or Oswald Spengler or George Orwell, for that matter—so often both right and wrong that it is hard to write work of synthesis which really holds together. This Professor Bracher has undoubtedly done. Those who do not agree with all his political assumptions will at least find themselves forced to think again about their own, and every reader will profit from his familiarity with a wide range of political and sociological literature and his original insights into the nature of our century.

COLIN JONES

Charity and 'Bienfaisance': The treatment of the poor in the Montpellier region 1740-1815

317pp. Cambridge University Press, £25, 0 521 24593 1

Charity and 'Bienfaisance' is yet another valuable book on eighteenth-century France by a pupil of Richard Cobb. No one can be expected to emulate the reckless *parade* and imaginative writing of the master, but Colin Jones conforms to Cobb's standards of massive archival coverage and shares his humane outlook and sceptical distrust of the sort of established history which rams human beings into categories and forgets their individuality; he writes, moreover, a clear and workmanlike prose.

According to Napoleon, the business of the historian is "to carve the past at the joints". The task has been judiciously done in drawing the limits of this study in both space and time. Though the documentation comes chiefly from the charitable institutions of the town of Montpellier itself, Dr Jones has chosen to include the whole 'region', the modern department of the Hérault—in *ancien régime* terms, the dioceses of Agde, Béziers, Lodève, Montpellier and Saint-Pons. The inclusion of barren mountain areas and sterile manufacturing localities depending on the water power of the hills makes it possible to have wide-ranging discussions of economic circumstances, to study migratory

labour and vagabondage, and to compare the impact of the legislation of the central government on country areas as against the town. Chronologically, the account runs from 1740 to 1815, which makes possible a crucial comparison between the achievements of the *ancien régime* in looking after the poor and those of the Revolution, a subject which Right and Left, Catholic and anticlerical, have long debated in France.

Léon Lallemand's *La Révolution et les pauvres* (1898) was an indictment of the failure of successive revolutionary governments to alleviate misery—because their anticlerical policies had ruined the old Christian charity, and the utopian theories of the Enlightenment proved to be incompatible with human nature as they were irrelevant in times of crisis. Subsequently, the charitable work of the *ancien régime* has been the subject of some outstanding historical writing; after Camille Bloch (1908) and various local historians, culminating in J. P. Gutton (1971), came an Anglo-American take-over with Olwen Hufton's splendid *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (1974) and Cissie C. Fairchild's *Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence, 1640-1789* (1976). By contrast, until recently the history of the poor in the revolutionary period has been neglected; then, in 1981, came Alan Forrest's slim and cogent volume, *The French Revolution and the Poor* (1981). (Forrest, another pupil of Cobb, pays tribute to the help he received from Jones, a general example of cooperation between historians engaged in a race to publish.)

John McManners

The poor of eighteenth-century France, it seems, have become something of an English monopoly. They were not politically or ideologically significant, they were not an identifiable class or denizens of a particular *milieu*; they were a pathetic collectivity retrospectively defined only by the fact that, whether because of illness or accident or unemployment, bad weather or crop failure, they were on the verge of starvation. In *A Sense of Place* (1975), and more especially in the essay "A View on the Street: Seduction and Pregnancy in Revolutionary Lyon", Cobb himself describes why they are worth studying and what we seek to know about them. He assumes, he says, that "the death from hunger, even of a poor woman, 200 years ago, is in itself important", and around the margins of judicial and administrative proceedings (and in *Death in Paris*, from lists of the clothing of suicides fished out of the river), he looks for the assumptions and conventions of popular collective behaviour, the venues of sociability and "the camaraderie of the street", the people's ideas of what constitutes an obligation, their reticences and their pride, *les polices et les pudeurs of the very poor*.

In his two most attractive chapters, Jones contributes essays along the lines of this formula—one chapter describes popular attitudes towards charity, and the other attitudes towards medicine. Briefly, he finds that the poor hated charitable institutions and distrusted doctors and all in authority. Rot broth and a tankard of wine (if you could get them) were better than all the

physician's remedies. Independence, in whatever discomfort, was better than depending on hand-outs from officialdom. If they had to be supported, let it be by their own kin, or by secretly given charity—say, from the curé.

The English historians of the poor have their specialities. Cobb's "sociability", Professor Hufton's economic circumstance ("the economy of makeshifts" by which they stayed alive at all), Jones is essentially the historian of official attitudes. As his title implies, he is contrasting the Christian "charity", which was the theory of the old monarchy, with the *bienfaisance* of the revolutionary ideal (a term coined by the abbé de Saint-Pierre, popularized by Voltaire and becoming the watchword of the Comité de Mendicité of the Constituent Assembly from January 1790). In his pages we read the sad and picturesque chronicle of the ramshackle charitable institutions of the *ancien régime*. We catch glimpses of the great paternalistic mood—the two dozen notables around the green-felted table under the chairmanship of the bishop and in the shade of portraits of benefactors, presiding over the *Hôpital Général*; the great ladies of the town who ran the Miséricorde's manifold organizations of home help. We catch glimpses of the poor in their misery: the infants with one chance in five of surviving on their way to wet nurses in the mountains, the queue at the *Prêt Gratuit* (the religiously organized pawnshop); the sisters at the *Hôtel-Dieu* overfeeding the patients and preventing the doctors getting access to them for research; the police running in anyone in rags and without documents when the government offered a bonus for every vagabond incarcerated in its new *dépôt de mendicité* and a proud example—the *White Sentinels* in 1793 positively forbidding the *Hôpital Général* to assist its members, a task it proposed to keep within the confraternity. Throughout, in contrast to the story so often told by local historians, Jones gives statistics—of the aims, of numbers of inmates, of financial arrangements, of bequests in wills and so on.

The Comité de Mendicité of the early days of the Revolution saw *bienfaisance* as meaning state intervention and direction, with as much help as possible given in the home, while two kinds of institution would cope with intractable cases—one to provide work for the unemployed, another to discipline the idle. In view of these theoretical objectives, Jones entitles his section on the years 1789-1795 "Towards the 'Welfare State'". What actually happened makes gloomy reading (he cites Alfred Cobban, "whoever won the Revolution, the poor lost"). As examples one might cite the inadequate votes of money by the government (replacing abolished revenues) in February 1792 and August 1794, the collapse of nineteen of the forty-three hospitals of

the region, the uselessness of the "citoyennes dévouées au service des pauvres" who in some institutions replaced the nuns (while wards were renamed after revolutionary heroes, or after revolutionary virtues, with "Courage" reserved for the operating theatre). Oddly enough, all the examples of disaster given above come in Jones's next section, "The Retreat from the Welfare State, c.1795-c.1800"—does this chronological displacement reflect a subconscious wish on the part of a remarkably impartial historian to try to allow *bienfaisance* rather better marks than it deserves?

The last chapter of the book (conclusion excepted), "From the Concordat to the Restoration", covering 1800-15, is the most original, and certainly will be new to the English reader. Its rich detail defies summary, but briefly speaking, nuns and confraternities came back, "Christian" alms-giving revived, authority promoted charitable institutions which were "tangled, discrete, and unambiguously pragmatic", resembling "the limited reform endeavours of the Ancien Régime monarchy"; the allocation of a specific tax (*an octroi*) gave these institutions a chance to operate under the direction of local notables, but with the central government exercising iron control through the prefect. The Church played its part, but was no longer in charge of charity; the government in a tentative and not very generous way had taken over. The medical profession at least was satisfied—the nurses were now subject to the doctors in the hospitals.

Jones does not take sides in the old controversy concerning the charitable policies of the *ancien régime* as compared with those of the Revolution. With a wealth of local detail, ranging from economic trends to the exigencies of war, from the complacent assumptions of bureaucrats to the proud and fatuous assumptions of the poor, he makes what happened on either side of 1789 understandable. His book is an illustration of the fact that in the last resort, eighteenth-century France can only be understood in detail through its provincial history. One hopes that the poverty which has descended on our universities will not bring to an end the pilgrimages of young English researchers going off (as Colin Jones must have done ten years or so ago), falling in love with some corner of France, and being touched by the absurd, the heroic determination to return again and again, living on fleecy and cheese and coffee, and lodging in garrets, until the archives, the streets and the rolling countryside have yielded up the secrets of their history.

Volume Seven of selections from the *Annales Economiques, Sociétés, Civilisations* (260pp., Johns Hopkins, £23.55, paperback £7.65, 0 8018 2776 0) contains ten articles on "Ritual, Religion and The Sacred".

Defying the Revolution

Alan Forrest

DONALD SUTHERLAND

The Chevaux: The Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1795

360pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £25, 0 19 822579 2

"As a movement", states Donald Sutherland emphatically, "*chevaunerie* has no history". It produced no coherent philosophy or campaign of counter-revolution, no dramatic military losses for the Republic. Rather it consisted of isolated, morale-sapping attacks on Republican outposts, of tag-rag raids on national lands, humiliations of army posts, and humiliations of constitutional priests. Like royalism in the Midi after *Thermidor*, it blended uneasily into the world of banditry and highway robbery. Yet it was also a specifically Breton movement, drawing its support from the villages of rural Brittany and making use of local topography to defy the Revolutionary state. Perhaps for this very reason *chevaunerie* has tended to become obscured by its own mythology; the *chevaunier* is still frequently portrayed in essentially literary terms, as the romantic hero of Balzac's novels, the brave royalist diehard slipping unseen into the protective mists of Michelet's *Bohème*.

It is Sutherland's aim to rescue the *chevauniers* from the folklorists. In this he might seem to be applying to Upper Brittany the economic and social models deployed by such historians as J. P. Fauchoux and Tilly to analyse the departments of the West, all of whom, though in differing ways, produced images of peasants driven to revolt by poverty and proletarianization, of political loyalties explained in terms of the growing urban market economy. But he effectively demonstrates that such models are inapplicable to a Breton countryside where there were few towns, where the textile industry was well-established, and where villages were long-integrated into the families of professional men rather than alien intruders from the commercial towns. Here, unlike the West, there can be no question of

low-country conflicts supplying a universal sociological explanation of revolt. If peasants did periodically vent their anger on the towns, it was on towns as administrative centres rather than as outposts of capitalism.

In his quest for alternative explanations Sutherland presents a detailed social and political analysis of one of the Breton departments, the Ille-et-Vilaine, between 1770 and 1795. There was, he concludes, no "general crisis" in the region, though in the 1780s peasants who owned their land were prospering at the expense of tenant-farmers, causing tensions within rural society. But generally he portrays a stable society which provided employment for the vast majority of its population and where wage levels were being maintained. *Chevaunerie* cannot easily be presented as a symptom of social malaise; the map of revolt conforms to no clear social pattern, and where communities split it was not along class divides. The average *chevaunier* was a peasant or rural artisan, young, unmarried, and possibly poorer, than average: the only social indicator to emerge was that revolt was more likely in parishes where bourgeois property was extensive and concentrated in large blocks. The author therefore concludes that it was the implantation of the Revolution, rather than the social structure which stimulated *chevaunerie*.

For a deep-seated sense of tradition and community characterized the Breton countryside, and when the state intruded resentment. It is no accident that the greatest upsurge of *chevaunerie* followed the attempt in the spring of 1793 to recruit a reluctant peasantry into the armies. Religion, too, was an integral part of the local culture, part faith, part superstition, a simple belief in curing ailments which bound the people to their parish priests, especially in times of uncertainty or disaster. It is for this reason that the 'Civil Constitution caused' such bitterness for the imposition of a constitutional cure was an attack on the community itself, an attack sufficiently grave to elicit the support of the Revolution. Where the community came under attack, local people would rise in arms and even

turn to the old nobility for leadership. The *chevauniers* spoke the language of the rural community and represented its threatened values, whereas the Republic, with its military demands, its constitutional priests and its national ideology, could only seem foreign and menacing.

In the final analysis, Sutherland's interpretation is neither social nor economic nor strictly political. It is primarily cultural—what explains why there was no obvious class division between *chevauniers* and republicans, why both could appeal to wide sections of the community. This is a thesis consistent with what we know about peasant politics in the nineteenth century, emphasizing the traditional cohesiveness of village society and the suspicion which greeted ideas emanating from the outside. The author has done more than simply add another piece to the expanding jigsaw of provincial history during the French Revolution. He has helped to place rural revolution in its cultural context, to reconcile the Revolutionary climacteric with the world of peasant traditionalism.

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Pre-capitalist preconceptions

Adrian Wooldridge

MAURICE BLOCH

Marxism and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship
180pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
£9.50
0 19 876091 4

The past two decades have produced an energetic revival of Marxist anthropology. Student radicalism made a number of gifted converts among apprentice anthropologists, while anti-colonialism generated interest in the internal structures of peasant societies and encouraged a widespread re-examination of the relationship between advanced and dependent economies. The feminist movement has created an eager audience for Marxist notions of female power and sexual freedom in pre-class societies. De-Stalinization has promoted contacts between Soviet and Western anthropologists and provoked a measure of revision in communist orthodoxy.

Maurice Bloch has played an important part in bringing this revival to Britain. He has edited a standard collection of essays on the theme and he enjoys an easy familiarity with avant-garde French Marxist anthropology. His latest book is intended to introduce Marxist anthropology to a non-specialist audience. His account is strictly historical, though he adds an evaluation of Marx and Engels' anthropology in the light of modern research. But in general he refuses to give an analytical account of the relationship between his two themes, and it is as a work of history, rather than of theory, that this book must be judged.

Marx and Engels developed a practical interest in anthropology, and Bloch devotes over half his book to

a discussion of their contributions to the subject. They turned to it for a combination of theoretical and rhetorical reasons. They sympathized with its evolutionary and materialist tone; they looked to it for evidence to extend their interpretation of history back beyond the ancient world; they felt that it provided independent support of their central contention that capitalism is a transient rather than a permanent social system. Their interpretation of the subject emphasized the contrast between primitive and capitalist societies. The primitive was defined by its lack of the central social institutions of capitalism: private property, the state and the family. In particular, they contrasted the contractual relationship of the labour market with the personal relationship of the kin network. They thus turned primitive society into a kind of ideal against which to measure the deficiencies of the capitalist system. Anthropology provided yet another missile to hurl at the complacent bourgeoisie.

How much of their argument can stand up to a critical examination? Bloch's answer to this question is a paradoxical one. The rhetorical side of their work remains powerful: their stress on the variety of social arrangements and on the peculiarity of capitalist notions of the family and property continues to command respect. But the empirical side is much less secure. Some of their ideas about property and the evolution of the state may still be valid, but their work on kinship is exploded. Their evidence is flimsy; their reasoning is flawed; and their vision of primitive communism is little short of nonsense. Their account of the evolution of social systems is much too Eurocentric. Bloch suggests that the success of their rhetoric undermined the validity of their empirical arguments. In treating primitive society as a classless ideal, they robbed themselves of the analytical tools which they needed to explain it.

Engels's death ended the first creative period of Marxist anthropology. The next generation tended to remember the letters of the founders but to forget their spirit; they petrified Marxism into a closed one-dimensional orthodoxy. They presented the history of all societies as an inescapable unilinear process, took every opportunity to emphasize a strict theory of materialist determination and tried to merge historical evolution with natural evolution. Bloch points to canonical, intellectual and political reasons for the success of this orthodoxy. Engels's work acquired the central position in Marxist thought; none of Marx's anthropological writings had as yet been published. The tradition was inevitably influenced by the naturalistic and determinist tone of his thought. Sociobiological explanations of social phenomena exercised an enormous appeal. Marxists and non-Marxists alike longed to do for human history what Darwin had managed to do for natural history. The controversy over revisionism built this interpretation into political polemic, to question which was to condemn oneself as "petty bourgeois" and "counter-revolutionary".

The collapse of the Second International fragmented the Marxist tradition along national lines. The Russian Revolution secured a permanent institutional base for the classical orthodoxy. This led to a brief period of intellectual experiment and ethnographic progress. Russian anthropologists gathered mountains of material on the ethnic diversity of the Soviet population, questioned some of Engels's distinctions between property-owning and pre-property-owning societies and suggested a variety of solutions to the peasant question. But the party wasted little time in forcing the subject back into its strait-jacket. Under Stalin it could do little more than illustrate the truth of a simplified version of Engels's theory. In America, the Marxist tradition

suffered the same fate as all materialist and evolutionary arguments: it was swamped by the fashion for cultural explanations. In Britain, Marxism was irrelevant to the golden age of anthropology, because functionalism was based upon a rejection of both evolutionary and conflict theory. In France, however, the story was rather different. Bloch is at his most informative on French anthropology. The Marxist tradition got off to a slow start in France, but during the 1960s, he argues, it began to exercise a powerful intellectual influence, encouraged by the war in Algeria and the opening up of the Communist Party line. But what secured it, according to Bloch, was the theoretical revolution brought about by Louis Althusser. Althusser's distinction between Marx's general intellectual method and its specific application to capitalism, combined with his emphasis on the canonical importance of *Capital*, had far-reaching implications for Marxist anthropology. The proper task of the faithful was no longer to repeat the words of the founders, but rather to apply their distinctive concepts to pre-capitalist modes of production. Many French anthropologists, notably Maurice Godelier, P. P. Rey and Emmanuel Terray, responded to this challenge by importing Althusser's variety of structuralism into their arguments; by analysing primitive communities with such concepts as class, exploitation and ideology; and by stressing the connections between primitive modes of production and the dominant capitalist system. One of the main points of this book is to advertise the merits of French Marxism. Under Stalin, Marxists may have assimilated an orthodoxy, under Althusser it reclaimed its rightful role as a creative intellectual movement.

Unfortunately, Bloch's style does little to advance his cause. His favourite words are "totally", "wholly" and "fundamentally"; and he uses them with an abundance which is reminiscent of Dava Spart. Thus, "the

fundamental Marxist contrast between production for use and production for exchange... needs fundamental reworking": in primitive societies, work and leisure are "totally intertwined". Engels followed Morgan in stressing "the total relevance of Darwinism". Bloch congratulates Godelier for "stressing a point that Marxists with little knowledge of anthropology find difficult [sic] to accept and understand: the fact that kinship, or for that matter religion, is a genuine fundamental experience of many precapitalist peoples and that it is totally wrong to suggest that it is a kind of metaphor enforced by the power that be". But two pages later, in order to balance his account, he reproaches Godelier with the observation that "close knowledge of people everywhere seems to reveal a situation where people are less totally mystified about the real conditions of their existence than suggested by Godelier". Bloch's evaluation of Marxist anthropology seems to depend on such an abuse of language. He deploys these key words to squash criticism and sidestep evidence. If Marx and Engels were wrong about primitive societies, at least their theory is fundamentally correct. If they got their arguments upside down, at least they recognized that everything is interconnected.

Bloch is optimistic about the future of his subject. If it is treated as method rather than as dogma, he argues, Marxism may generate a renaissance in anthropology. But such optimism owes more to faith than to observation. For more than half a century Marxist anthropology functioned as a political orthodoxy which was both intellectually irrelevant and rhetorically tedious. Its current revival has been bought at considerable cost. It has fallen into the hands of a clique of squabbling theoreticians. And it has compromised its ideological purity by flirting with "bourgeois" ideas. Marxist anthropology may well end up by modifying itself out of existence.

Dancing themselves better

Alan Barnard

RICHARD KATZ

Bolling Energy: Community Healing among the Kachahari Kung
329pp. Harvard University Press.
£17.50
0 674 07735 0

One of the most fascinating healing rituals in the world is the medicine dance of the Bushmen or San peoples of southern Africa. Bushmen live in nomadic but territorial bands, each numbering only a few dozen individuals, and until very recently have gathered and hunted for all their subsistence. Unlike agriculture and pastoralism, which are labour-intensive, though high-yield activities, the foregoing way of life apparently leaves much time for non-subsistence pursuits, and the medicine dance is perhaps the most important of these for the Bushmen.

Bolling Energy describes the medicine dance and related healing rituals of the Kung, who are not only the Bushmen best known to the outside world, but also the most skillful practitioners of community healing by trance performance. Half of all Kung men end ten per cent of the women are capable of achieving a trance state.

Medicine dances may be held at any time. Sometimes they are spontaneous, and sometimes planned a day or two in advance in order to give time for members of neighbouring bands to attend. No one is excluded. Indeed, the trance "cure" is intended for the physical benefit of everyone present, and not merely for any who happen to be ill. It is as much preventative as curative.

The dance usually begins in the early evening. Women of the band build a small fire, in an open place away from the grass but in the encampment. Perhaps only a few are

present at the beginning, but before long all the women appear. They sing, over and over again, the same intensely hypnotic tunes. Their only accompaniment is fast, precise and almost deafening hand-clapping in diverse and complicated rhythms. Eventually, the entire band and its visitors are present. The men, and occasionally one or more women, dance in a great circle around the singers, then between them and directly past the fire; then around the singers again. They keep this up hour after hour with only brief pauses between each dance. Gradually, in the stomachs of one or more of the dancers, *num* ("medicines") begin to "boil". Metaphorical "death" (more literally known as *kila*, "trance") occurs, and the curing can begin in earnest.

Through much of this book Richard Katz tries hard, and with some success, to explain happenings from a Kung viewpoint. There are many long and semi-comprehensible quotations from Kung -trance performers (ie translators), describing what *kila* is like. Professor Katz, in a paper spirit of mystification, retains the almost untranslatable Kung words *kila* and *num*, but unitalicized and anglicized to "kila" and "num". In *kila* (which is the spelling used in Katz's more technical publications) men "see" God, spirits and animals and "feel" painful *num* rising to their heads and penetrating each part of their bodies.

The curing itself involves a trance performer pinching his hands on the bodies of the participants: men, women, and children and anthropologists alike. Although spectators may sit at a separate fire, they too are part of what is a communal ritual, and they too may be singled out for treatment. The dance often goes on all night, and in the morning everyone disperses, tired but emotionally and even physically better for it.

Bolling Energy is by no means the first account of the Kung medicine dance. Indeed Katz himself, among

many others, has published on the subject before, including papers which are incorporated in the present volume. But as Raymond Prince notes in the dust-jacket blurb, Katz's full-length version "puts flesh on the bare bones of earlier accounts". The emphasis is on detailed description, on trance as viewed by the performers, on education for "transcendence", on psychological, as opposed to sociological, interpretation. Katz's background as an educationalist and psychologist is readily apparent and often used to good effect.

Another strength of the book is that it reveals rather more of the ethos of Bushman life than do the more traditional anthropological monographs. Like Marjorie Shostak in

her recent book *Nisa*, Katz gives us an unusual amount of biographical detail, and with it, a better picture of Bushman life than could any description based primarily on ecology, social structure or culture in the abstract. The drawback is that these latter concerns can only receive brief treatment in the present work. For that reason the book is best read in conjunction with, rather than in preference to, the more theoretical and anthropological monographs.

There is however one set of bare bones which no description of Kung trance performance, including this one, has yet covered with flesh: music and dance. There can be few readers of this book who have heard medicine dance music or seen a medicine dance,

even on film. Although no printed account - verbal, musical or kinesthetic - could portray the full feeling of the event, a much more detailed exposition on music and dance, and perhaps a partial score, would certainly help. Katz's description seems very incomplete without it.

In general, though, the book is as interesting and well-written piece of work, which should appeal to the layman as much if not more as to the anthropologist or psychologist. Indeed, Katz gives few of the comparisons or theoretical asides that a specialist reader might expect. He leaves the data, and the Kung, to speak for themselves. Few of the references in his extensive bibliography are even mentioned in the text.

Poor man of God

Ahmed Al-Shahi

SAID S. SAMATAR

Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The case of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan
234pp. Cambridge University Press.
£19.50
0 521 23233 1

Oral verse and "cootived" speech have been important in the history, politics, ecology, and social organization of the Somali pastoralists. Their significance has already been shown in the excellent work of I. M. Lewis and B. W. Andriewski, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (1964), but Said S. Samatar has made further researches, and introduces new material to good effect.

The second half of the book deals with the rise and fall of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan, who emerged at the beginning of the century as the leader of the Somali nationalist movement, and whose aim

was to dislodge the Europeans (mainly British) and Ethiopians from Somalia. Dubbed by his enemies the "Mad Mullah", but regarding himself as a "poor man of God", the Sayyid succeeded in rallying support for his cause in three different ways. First, he was a warrior whose political power stemmed from the support rendered by his own kin groups and from the alliances he concluded with other pastoralist clans. Secondly, the Sayyid was a mystic and a holy man who appealed to the Somalis through Islamic sentiment to drive out the foreign "infidels". On his return from pilgrimage to Mecca, he brought to the Somalis the Saalihiya Sufi order, which was resented by the already established and powerful Qadiriya order. Through the Saalihiya he was able to urge clans and to declare a holy war against the foreign occupiers and their collaborators, establishing a movement which succeeded in harassing the British and others for two decades.

The movement was given impetus in a third way, with which much of this book is concerned: the Sayyid was both a poet and an orator, and as such he

influenced Somali poetry as well as furthering his cause. Much of his verse, which was composed between 1900 and 1920 (the year he died), was political and directed against his enemies. Dr Samatar provides interesting quotations from it, though one would have liked to see some of these poems given in full with parallel text.

The political poetry of the Somali exemplified by the verse of Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan and others, has a message: that it is preferable to talk and persuade than resort to the use of arms. It is unfortunate that this admirable principle has not always been observed to practice in Somalia.

Journey through Kenya, by Mohammed Amin, Duncan Williams, and Brian Tetley, with an introduction by the late William Holden, has recently been published (182pp. Bogle Head, £4.95, 0 373 30485 8). The text contains a great deal of general information - historical, geographical, biological, ecological, and anthropological - and is illustrated with 150 colour photographs.

THE FLESH IS WEAK

An Intimate History of the Church of England
ANDREW BARROW
This book, which tells the story of the Church of England from its inception to the present, is a masterpiece of scholarship and insight. It is a history of the Church of England, not just of its leaders and its institutions, but of its people and its culture. It is a history of the Church of England, not just of its past, but of its present and its future. It is a history of the Church of England, not just of its faith, but of its life.

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Moderately modernistic

Andrew Saint

Nordic Classicism 1910-1930

180pp. The Museum of Finnish Architecture, Kasarmikatu 24, Helsinki, E12.50.
951 9229 21 3

We forget it now, but the architecture most warmly admired in this country thirty years ago, as it had been for thirty years before that, was not German or French or even American, but Scandinavian. Today, on the same lingers on that the tradition of Scandinavian interior design and furniture is somehow superior to our own. But the respect and affection which British architects felt for their Scandinavian counterparts and which decisively shaped the looks of buildings as diverse as Norwich City Hall, the RIBA's Headquarters and the Royal Festival Hall, have vanished entirely.

This catalogue-cum-book, the product of an exhibition held at the Museum of Finnish Architecture in 1982, is a reminder of that connection – or more precisely, of the strongest link in the chain. In all four Scandinavian countries, the pattern of architecture between 1900 and 1930 falls into a clear, comprehensible period. First came "National Romanticism" in which Finland, seeking tokens of cultural identity perhaps more urgently than Norway, Denmark or Sweden, achieved most ardent expression through the arts-and-crafts oriented architecture of Eliel Saarinen and Lars Sonck. There ensued, from about 1910, a reaction towards greater discipline and elegance, the phase of "Nordic Classicism" which is the business of this book. This was led by Sweden and Denmark, the older and richer nations, with British architects looking chiefly towards the Swedish work of Ragnar Östberg, Gunnar Asplund and Ivar Tengbom. Scandinavian Classicism burst upon a wider world at the Gothenburg Exhibition of 1923. Thereafter a procession of English architects and students made the pilgrimage to Stockholm, some going on also to Copenhagen and Helsinki.

Soon however the wheel turned again. Visitors to the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930 found that the Swedes, under the leadership of Asplund and Sven Markelius, had

practically all turned to functionalism. But Scandinavian Modernism always wore a relaxed face which made it acceptable to the cautious, dogma-fearing English. Many younger British designers came to feel that its greatest exponent, Alvar Aalto the Finn, was the touchstone for what a humane, liberal type of modern architecture ought to be about. Aalto, indeed, still fills that role for certain architectural theorists like Kenneth Frampton (a contributor to this volume), who wish to rescue the reputation of the Modern Movement from the accusations of error and rigidity so easily levelled against Gropius and Le Corbusier. Aalto's star, perhaps, has never been higher; but his predecessors have been unfairly eclipsed.

In some ways Nordic Classicism grew naturally from the romantic phase which preceded it. Östberg's Stockholm City Hall, the most visible public monument of the period, illustrates this well. Östberg won the commission as early as 1903, but it was erected (after manifold changes of brief and style) only in 1909-23. A building with a grand lake-side setting. It beautifully reconciles Venetian stateliness and richness with a lacy Swedish silhouette of cupolas and turrets. Inside, cool Classical interiors are decked out with handmade furnishings and metalwork in which everything is refaced, pared down, elongated and made delicately sensual. Admiring British critics dubbed this blend of craftsmanship, restraint and sensuality "Swedish Grace". It pervaded Stockholm's public interiors of the 1920s, like Asplund's pretty, colourful Skandia Cinema and Tengbom's grander Concert Hall. Its origins can be sought in the spawdwork done during the National Romantic period by the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts and in the teachings of J. G. C. Jönsson, the most respected architect of the previous generation. Little in English seems to be available on Clason, but it was under his influence that Asplund and others set up the informal Klara School, through which most architects of the "Swedish Grace" persuasion passed.

On the other hand, many Scandinavian designers hailed the new classicism as a break with the undisciplined, chauvinistic vulgarities of the immediate past. They revered the "cleanliness" and sobriety represented by international neo-classicism of the years around 1800, by

Soane in England, Ledoux in France and Schinkel in Germany, all of whom influenced, for instance, Asplund's circular Stockholm Public Library of 1920-28. Copenhagen in particular had a legacy of fine neo-classical buildings like Bredesbo's Thorvaldsen Museum which imparted a severity and power to certain Danish buildings of the period. From Carl Petersen's tiny Faborg Museum to the huge Police Headquarters of Hack Kampmann and Aage Rafn.

Nevertheless, following German architects and theorists like Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Mebes and A. E. Brückmann, the Scandinavians valued neo-classicism's simplicity above its monumentality. The lure of simplicity was especially strong in the case of Italy, a country which deeply attracted the Nordic Classicists. When, after the cooled-up period of the First World War, they were able to travel freely again in Europe, the famed Scandinavians fell upon Italian light, colour and texture with ecstasy. Yet what they cherished most were the plain buildings. "Palladio, Palladio," wrote the Finnish architect Hilding Ekstrand, "in dress uniform at every street corner, with columns, architraves, cornices – the whole arsenal. Impressive but trite. Between them simple, bare houses, just walls and holes, but with distinct harmonious proportions." It follows that many of the nicest works of the period are simple, colour-washed villas and housing projects. In Sweden, where good facing bricks were hard to obtain, even the big public buildings were often rendered and gaily painted; in Stockholm, Tengbom's concert hall is a rich blue. Asplund's library a more traditional ochre. In austere Denmark, by contrast, plainer washes or brick surfaces prevailed.

The arrangement of this bilingual catalogue, by nation and then by individual architect, with essays preceding each of the four

sections and a good introduction by Henrik Anderson of the Swedish Museum of Architecture, is clear and informative, and allows the reader to grasp the respective countries' contributions to Nordic Classicism. The Norwegians seem to have been the least involved in the movement. The Finns were livelier, but the constraints of the post-independence period limited their scope and the one large public monument of the time, J. S. Ström's Parliament Building, seems sadly lumpy. In informal projects like the wood-built garden suburb of Käpylä near Helsinki they were unsurpassed, and in Aalto, who in the 1920s was working quietly in the provinces in the tradition of low-key Italian Classicism, they possessed an architect of astonishing future elasticity. The Danes were drier and less absolutely committed to Classicism, but could boast some original interior designers like Aage Rafn and Kaare Klint, and were to the fore in promoting the kind of decent simplified housing projects which were to be typical of Scandinavian social democracy. Danish Classicism was not especially influential abroad, but two Danes of the period, both still living, left their mark in this country: S. E. Rasmussen, whose London *The Unicorn City* remains after fifty years the most perceptive introduction to our capital's architecture, and Ove Arup, to whose creative engineering skills many early Modern Movement buildings in England owe their form as well as their structures.

Overwhelmingly, though, it was to the prosperous and settled culture of Sweden that admirers of Classicism looked. Here two figures particularly stand out. One is Ivar Tengbom, whose large practice included the delicate, twin-towered Hogalids Church set on a hill overlooking Stockholm, a couple of commercial palaces which rise well above pastiche, and the colonnaded, ornamented Stockholm Concert Hall, perhaps the

Swedish building most copied by the English. The RIBA gave Tengbom the Gold Medal in 1938, and recently the Architectural Association showed an enterprising exhibition of his work, to keep up the tradition of English reverence. The other and more substantial figure is Gunnar Asplund. An architect of immense assurance and vitality, his small oeuvre spans the whole range of Scandinavian architecture during this period and his monument of Nordic Classicism, yet the setting for the exhibition of 1930 which drew everyone forward unrepentantly towards functionalism. He, more than the then obscure Aalto, was the father of the Scandinavian Modern Movement.

Floated, why did the Scandinavian achievement appeal so deeply in England? It seems mostly to be a matter of parallel development. In Sweden and elsewhere, an arts-and-crafts tradition became blended with classicism; the same thing happened with English neo-Georgianism. But the Scandinavians brought to this fusion an extra originality which appealed to British architects looking for a compromise with modernism and the torifying principles of Le Corbusier. The architects who went Swedish, therefore, were the moderate modernizers, people like Grey Wornham, Giles Gilbert Scott and C. H. James, rather than the diehards like Lutyens or Blomfield on the one hand, or young turks like Wells Coates or Maxwell Fry on the other. Their intelligent middle road is just beginning to seem attractive, now that 'historicism' is no longer the dirty word it once was. If architects insist on harking back to Classicism once again, as they seem to be doing, they could do worse than go and see how it was being done sixty years ago in the Sweden of Tengbom and Asplund: decently, cleverly and above all quietly.

Chase's comments on all this are worth quoting for a number of reasons, but chiefly for the light they may shed on the attitude with which younger architectural historians (and not only in California) set about their work:

What is so astonishing about this remodel is the attitude expressed in it that anything can be transformed into anything else. To attempt to transform the Case Study House No. 17 into a Greek temple with a Hollywood Regency street facade requires the most profound disregard of traditional notions of architectural integrity. The word 'remodel' was, however, quite successful in bringing out the simplified classicism of the original.

This will paraphrase quite neatly into a fair description of the direction of contemporary revisionist architectural history:

What is so astonishing about anyone taking this remodel seriously is the attitude that absolutely anything can be transformed into anything else. To attempt to transform the Case Study House No. 17 into a Greek temple with a Hollywood Regency street facade requires the most profound disregard of traditional notions of architectural integrity. The word 'remodel' was, however, quite successful in bringing out the simplified classicism of the original.

Or words to that effect. . . In what is effectively a re-run of the pioneer punditry of the 1950s, Chase goes beyond a superficial camp enthusiasm for trendy trash, and gives the product a thorough, well-observed and well-researched treatment, taking as pretensions of those who claim to be above such things. The book is that must be extended to this level, an invaluable addition to the literature on Los Angeles should be required, with a warning that it may prove, in the mental health of those who read it, that only the Eternal Verities are the scholar's care.

DAVID ROSAND

Painting in Cinquecento Venice
Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto
340pp with 137 black-and-white and eight colour illustrations. Yale University Press, £30.
0 300 02626 9

The title of this book suggests a general history of Venetian sixteenth-century painting focused on the work of three of its greatest masters, but what we in fact get is a series of separate essays, all of which, with the exception of Chapter 5, have been published elsewhere. Although extensively revised and interrelated, they are not, as the title suggests, one with another, they nonetheless only deal with selected aspects of the subject. "Studies in Venetian Cinquecento Painting" would be a more appropriate name, since *Painting in Cinquecento Venice* does not provide an overall history of painting in sixteenth-century Venice. But the studies are, individually and collectively, of great interest and to revise them, pull them together, and make them available in book form has been eminently worthwhile. They offer much important new information and many new perspectives on the richest century of the Venetian Renaissance. The book is a contribution of the first importance to the study of Venetian art and one which, not least, is its exhaustive and exemplary range of bibliographical reference, no general library covering the visual arts should be without.

The first of the five essays, "The Conditions of Painting in Renaissance Venice", first published in *L'Art* in 1970, relates the conservatism of Venetian art to the conservatism of the Venetian state, although David Rosand exaggerates this as against what he considers the more innovative tendencies of Venetian art. The point is that the Venetian state, in the person of the artist in Venice and on the continuing power of the Venetian Painters' Guild, the Arte del Dipintore. He draws attention to the emerging distinction between *deputati* and *pittori* – the latter referring to what came to be called the artists, the former to anyone working with brushes – and comments on the continuing power of the state-controlled guild structure in the sixteenth century. So strong was this that even after a century of struggle the *pittori*, although they finally gained independence from the *deputati*, failed to form their own Academy and only achieved a separate Guild governed by the same state regulations as the traditional guilds. Including the Arte del Dipintore from which they had just escaped. The kind of cross-fertilization between the arts which was standard in Florence and which permitted, at its most elevated level, the career of Michelangelo as a sculptor, painter, architect, and poet, was not only because of the tradition of separating the arts but also because guild regulations made it illegal.

Professor Rosand then moves on to the historiography of Venetian painting and its account of Venetian technical practice, particularly the significance of the development of the oil medium. Unfortunately by his own view of that practice is seriously marred by the misapprehension that Cinquecento painters, after Giorgione, commonly worked on a toned ground. But Titian's paintings – the one of Venetian Cinquecento art – are almost always painted on a white ground, and while tonalism is of course of primary importance in the work of Titian, it is not a degree in the work of Jacopo Bassano. It is present only to a very modified extent in Veronese. Indeed Rosand's whole picture of this aspect of Venetian art is seriously distorted by an over-emphasis on the significance of tone as opposed to the late Bellini. The extraordinary, almost Cézannesque, way in which colour and light were used in the work of Titian and his followers is a warning that it may prove, in the mental health of those who read it, that only the Eternal Verities are the scholar's care.

Venetian painting, and especially of Titian, as is the work of Giorgione.

The next two essays are devoted to Titian and were both originally published in the *Art Bulletin*. The first of them, "Titian and the Challenge of the Altarpiece", deals with what Rosand describes as Titian's transformation "of the notion of religious vision" and, in so far as it concerns the relationship of Titian's paintings to the sites for which they were intended, acknowledges and develops the ideas of the late Johannes Wilde. His view, pioneered by Wilde, that the original eloquence and meaning of Titian's paintings can only be fully grasped when they are seen in the place for which they were painted is particularly apparent in his discussion of the Pesaro Altarpiece in the Frari – here revised because the recent cleaning of the picture has produced new evidence about its evolution. Readers acquainted with an earlier controversy about this painting will be glad to hear, if they do not know already, that the columns, whose authenticity Rosand and others (including, I am ashamed to say, myself) at one time doubted, have been shown to be genuine. There is a good account of the transition from Titian's original plan for the fictive painted architecture, which showed the scene taking place in a kind of transept opening up from the frame of the painting into the side of the church, and of the new plan in which the giant columns are deliberately disjoined from the rather fantastic architecture of the frame and so "declare a new order of proportion for a heavenly architecture".

This is surely a correct assessment of Titian's creative intentions which, in the picture's cleaned state, are likewise made manifest in the contrast between the visionary brilliance of the colour of the holy figures and the muted colours of the donors. Rosand's succeeding remarks on Titian's main Venetian altarpieces also convincingly relate the paintings both to their sites and to the texts from which they came; he emphasizes what he considers to be Titian's use of controlled visual symbolism, particularly the symbolism of light, in order to give dramatic expression to his themes.

The extent of that symbolism, the way it functions in Titian's paintings and its relation to style, is the subject of the central essay in the book, taking as its centrepiece the "Presentation of the Virgin" – still on the wall of the Scuola della Carità, now the Accademia, for which it was painted. Rosand clearly regards this essay as to a degree exemplary in its method of exploration and he is somewhat dismissive of the frivolity of earlier scholars who have seen this painting as a joyous exercise in the genre-like traditions of Caracciolo painting, a re-doing of Caracciolo after nature. Rosand does not deny this element, but he plays it down, seeking to relate all the elements of the picture to a central theme: that of the Virgin as an embodiment of divine wisdom symbolized by light. The painting is, he tells us, a far more serious and profound affair than we had lightly supposed.

This view is to be taken seriously, particularly as, in contrast to the more extreme exponents of a primarily iconographic interpretation of works of art, Rosand never suggests that Titian was merely the illustrator of a pre-ordained programme laid down by others. As he has already stated in an earlier essay, only a few of themselves would be content to let the pictorial potential of a text and only through their close and imaginative reading could the word become painting. But although I agree with this there is a serious difficulty in the kind of search for meaning which he undertakes. It is that the complexity of the search and the intellectual interest of the route can easily distort the nature of the discoveries made concerning the content of the painting itself, so that elements often quite conventional in their context, can appear to be part of a mighty intellectual scheme which is the province of the scholar rather than of the artist.

Rosand's interpretation of the

John Steer

"Presentation of the Virgin" includes a discussion of the buildings which flank the temple steps up which the Virgin, light-circled figure of the Virgin, is depicted climbing. He points out that the building which, according to tradition, stood next to the Temple of Solomon, was the Palace of Solomon and that this building was famous for its columned portico. Is not the columned building immediately behind the Virgin an obvious reference to this? Behind this is a further building whose brickwork plainly imitates that of the Palazzo Ducale. Does not this imply an equation between the Temple of Solomon and the Palazzo Ducale in Venice and not the whole – there are further more complex strands in the argument – representative of the wisdom of the Venetian state here paralleled with the wisdom of the Virgin, since the Palace of the Doges is itself a Palace of Justice and was associated with the wisdom of Solomon, a scene of whose judgment graces a corner of the Palazzo itself? Rosand feels that the whole odds up to an integrated statement of specifically Venetian values. "At a time when medieval Central Italian scenographic models – he is thinking primarily of Peruzzi's "Presentation" in Santa Maria della Pace – were rendering the Venetian tableau composition aesthetically obsolete, Titian demonstrated, and on a grand scale, the still vital potential of the native tradition, it celebrates the continuity and stability of the Serenissima and of course of its institutions such as the scuola grande".

To this my response is simultaneously "boloney" and "of course". "Boloney" because to suppose that, in the integrated way Rosand seems to be suggesting, Titian set out to demonstrate these concepts is contrary to everything we know about the spontaneous and unpremeditated nature of Titian's procedures as a painter; "of course" because the artist's obviously joyous adoption of the conventions of Venetian scuola painting, such as the inclusion of buildings which are imaginatively transmuted variants of the architecture of Venice, is in itself an expression of his innate Venetian-ness and a celebration of Venetian values. It is not so much that the kind of symbolic interpretation to which Rosand exposes almost every part of the picture is necessarily wrong – theologists who looked at this painting may well have thought about it like this – as that it somehow distorts the picture and the processes of creation which brought it about. Surely, it is likely that Titian had from childhood associated his experience of mountains and clouds with what he had heard of the *Song of Songs* – it would be astonishing if it had not done so – and it is certain that the obelisk in the "Presentation" is there because, by tradition, it has an association with divine wisdom. Nonetheless its presence in this particular painting must to a large degree be conventional and was surely accepted as such both by artist and patron. Each time it appears it cannot be made to carry the full weight of inherited meanings that lie behind it; a weight which the fragile structure of this painting (or indeed any painting) is far too light to carry. It is of course the duty of the scholar to draw attention to such meanings but to do so he must be careful not to make things which are for the artist quite natural and straightforward – for example, the inclusion of an obelisk in the "Presentation" – into complex intellectual acts, or to suppose either that a painting which is not an expression of such complex intellectual acts is "merely decoration". In every aspect of this painting Titian's imagination is at work, but I believe it functions in a much more direct and less theoretical way than Rosand supposes.

To do him justice he tries very hard to stress the organic nature of Titian's creative process and not simply "to replace a formal analysis by an iconographic one" but the dangers in his approach are perhaps illustrated by drawlog attention to the one element in the painting about which he is certainly wrong: the topography

of the landscape. He states, in company with most earlier writers, including myself, that it shows the mountains of the Dolomites around Titian's native Cadore. In fact it shows nothing of the kind. It represents, of course in a somewhat idealized form, the range of mountains stretching from Feltrino Belluno, up the Pieve valley, with Monte San Mauro in the foreground and the Tre Piave behind. The landscape of this marvellous valley, still an earthly paradise, with its easily recognizable mountain ranges, forms the setting of virtually all Titian's landscape backgrounds of the 1530s, as opposed to the paintings of the preceding decades which generally represent the plains of the Veneto. Clearly his feeling about this particular landscape was a primary factor in Titian's creativity at this period and even if it is the case, which seems unlikely, that the presence of these two famous Dolomite mountain tops in this picture, is a specific reference by him to the *Song of Songs*, what is most interesting, historically as well as aesthetically, is not the reference itself but the concrete form in which it is manifested: the new, joyous realization of the ruggedness of the mountains, the liberating realities of space and air.

Contemporaries of course knew this. It was this kind of purely visual experience that Aretino drew when, seeing through Titian's eyes, he painted his word picture of the Grand Canal at sunset, and we can be sure that he and others would have apprehended in a similar way the familiar old woman with a basket of eggs who sits, literally below Titian's, in the very foreground of Titian's painting. There is good reason to believe that she does, as Rosand says, embody, in her person and her position, the idea of the symgogue rejected and I do not doubt that the members of the Scuola would have known this. But would they not have taken it more or less for granted? What surely would have excited them as it excites us is the humanity with which the idea is realized; the brilliance and tenderness with which the old woman is painted and the references to similar figures in other paintings they knew, particularly the old woman in Caracciolo's *St. Ursula* cycle. The danger of Rosand's kind of analysis is that it seeks to situate the artist's power of mind, not in the act of painting but in the creation of a system of symbolic reference, which, even if present, could never be central to the experience which the painting gives. It is for this reason that, illuminating as what he has to say is, it does not, as an account of the painting's meaning, either for us or for the artist, carry conviction. In this essay Rosand seems to have forgotten that for visual artists, as Cézanne said about Raphael's session is likely to be formulated before thought.

But, this essay is not typical of the author's thinking as a whole. The two concluding essays on Veronese and Tintoretto are often brilliant in their exposition of the content of style and of particular value because, in a way far more systematic than has been attempted before, they relate painting to the practice of the Cinquecento theatre, a most likely source of direct inspiration for artists and one far too little explored. Rosand is also to be congratulated on introducing into the discussion of the iconography of later sixteenth-century painting the religious works of Aretino, which have also hitherto been curiously neglected.

But while the substance of these essays is of great value, Rosand's manner of expressing himself can be, particularly in the last essay, somewhat inflated and provides, on almost every page, quotations which are ready candidates for Pseudo Corner. The tendency to give a factitious air of intellectual complexity to quite simple things is the bane of academic writing on art. It is a pity that Rosand, who often writes extremely well, should fall a victim to it.

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), called by Winckelmann "father of German Art", is the subject of two new internationally packaged and profusely illustrated books, both written by eminent Dürer scholars. Fedja Anzolewsky's *Dürer: his life and work* (273pp, Gordon Fraser, £20.00, 0 86092 068 2) was first published in 1980 and has been translated by Holde Grove. Beginning with a general background chapter on Nuremberg, where Dürer was born, the artist's career is followed chronologically, with each of some ten chapters devoted to a short but significant phase – the founding of Dürer's workshop, Italy, the Emperor Maximilian, a journey to the Netherlands in 1520. There are 240 illustrations, of which about a quarter are in colour, showing Dürer's astonishing command of a variety of mediums and subjects.

Peter Strieder's *Dürer: Paintings, prints, drawings* (600pp, Frederick Muller, £35.00, 0 584 93038 1), translated by Nancy M. Gordon and Walter L. Strauss, has a larger format and almost twice as many pictures (455 including 140 in colour). The author's approach is thematic rather than chronological, with chapters entitled "The Nuremberg Environment", "Encounters", "His Works". Both books contain an index, bibliography and list of works, but Strieder's includes additional sections by other scholars: Gisela Goldberg on the technical analysis of the "Four Apostles", Joseph Harner on perspective and Matthias Wende on Dürer's writings.

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